



## SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

THE earliest American essayists were the clergymen. Those first days of the great republic were religious days. And although the pulpit was eminently spiritual, and fervid, and the devil was duly excoriated, and lessons of faith and humility were inculcated, yet those hour-long homilies were not all theology. Ethics, and manners, and social and national progress were discussed in sermons, which were in reality well-rounded essays. So that the influence of the pulpit became not only moral, but intellectual and even literary, as well. And the lecturers who came later, what was their mission but to spread the influence of the essay? Apart from polemics and in addition to politics and partisanship, they presented to well-filled halls throughout the country essays, essays, nothing but essays. And now the magazines, which visit every fireside, continue the cult and keep it well apace with poetry and fiction, far surpassing the former indeed in worth and quality. The essay then has ever been near to the American heart, has ever basked in public favor. And from the contingencies of our early days it could start full-panoplied and well-equipped. It had the culture of France and England as a fulcrum, and proceeded by main force to lift the taste of our early citizens from the merely utilitarian and the grubbing commonplace to a conception of the graceful and the beautiful. It was necessarily formative and educational. Its task was premeasured, foreordered. Those among the first essayists who were not in the pulpit might well have been, for they were ethical guides and pathfinders. And the statesmen and historians and poets who came to swell the list; they all wore the robe of the prophet and the teacher, even when dallying with lighter themes. It is well for our literature that the essayists have spoken. For whether one points to poetry or fiction or history or theology or science, in no category will he find an achievement of supremacy excelling that which the es-

of lavender which lingers about an ancient, forgotten, garret-hidden escritoire.

It is difficult for the present writer to speak of Whitman. In the first place, it seems to him something like praising Shakespeare, which appears not altogether a novel thing to do. And in the second place, he realizes that the "Whitman cult" is somewhat in advance of the times. But it is his belief that the coming centuries will place Walt Whitman high on the list of glorious names, the first voice of a united, crystallized, original America, a bard who sang democracy, our great citizenship, God-love, and the comradeship of the throbbing, suffering, hoping, majestic human heart.

*Chauncey C. Starkweather*

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN .....	I
The Way to Wealth .....	3
Morals of Chess .....	11
WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING .....	15
Self-Culture.....	17
WASHINGTON IRVING .....	63
The Mutability of Literature .....	65
RICHARD HENRY DANA .....	75
Kean's Acting .....	77
WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT .....	89
Essay on American Poetry.....	91
WILLIAM HICKLING PRESCOTT .....	101
Sir Walter Scott .....	103
GEORGE BANCROFT .....	149
The Last Moments of Eminent Men .....	151
RALPH WALDO EMERSON .....	169
Compensation.....	171
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE .....	191
The Procession of Life .....	193
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW .....	207
Defence of Poetry.....	209
JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER .....	233
John Bunyan .....	235
EDGAR ALLAN POE .....	253
The Philosophy of Composition .....	255
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES .....	267
The Professor's Paper .....	269
HARRIET BEECHER STOWE .....	291
The Old Oak of Andover.....	293
JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY .....	297
Peter the Great .....	299
HENRY DAVID THOREAU.....	351
Solitude .....	353
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL .....	361
Cambridge Thirty Years Ago .....	363



	PAGE
WALT WHITMAN .....	399
Preface to "Leaves of Grass" .....	401
FRANCIS PARKMAN.....	417
James Fenimore Cooper .....	419
GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.....	435
Our Best Society.....	437

## ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
RALPH WALDO EMERSON . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Photogravure after the original painting	
APOLLO MUSAGETES . . . . .	100
Photo-engraving from a marble statue	
EARLY VENETIAN PRINTING . . . . .	296
Fac-simile Design from a book printed at Venice in 1487	
PAGE FROM A BOOK OF HOURS . . . . .	360
Fac-simile of Printing and Engraving in the Fifteenth Century	



THE WAY TO WEALTH

—

MORALS OF CHESS

—

BY

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

1706—1790

Benjamin Franklin was a statesman, a scientist, a philosopher, a philanthropist, and a man of affairs as well as a man of letters. In each capacity he achieved something more than ordinary success. Of a career so many-sided only a brief summary can here be given. He was born at Boston in 1706, and was the youngest of seventeen children. His father, a tallow-chandler, was a practical man, but to provide anything beyond an ordinary school education for his youngest son was beyond his means. Thus we find Franklin at the age of twelve apprenticed to his brother James, who printed and published the Boston "Gazette," the second newspaper published in America. At this period he was an eager reader, and whatever he read impressed him deeply, especially a volume of "The Spectator," which led him to cultivate Addison's delightful style. In a short time he began a series of anonymous contributions to his brother's paper, but the latter proving too hard a master he ran away and went to Philadelphia, where he began life for himself. A trip to London followed, but he was soon back in Philadelphia, and established himself as a printer in 1726.

Three years later he became the publisher and proprietor of the "Pennsylvania Gazette." For this publication Franklin, who was almost its sole contributor, wrote a large number of essays in the Addisonian vein. In 1732 he founded "Poor Richard's Almanac." This publication immediately attained a large circulation, and gave Franklin both fame and wealth. Its humor was genuine and irresistible, but what gave the work its greatest popularity and its enduring fame was the collection of wise saws and homely proverbs. While he did not claim entire originality for this work, it is conceded that the homely epigrammatic form that constitutes its chief charm was entirely his own. In 1758, during a period of unusual financial depression, Franklin made selections from this work, and published them in the form of a sermon by "Father Abraham." This was at once received with universal favor, was published in numerous editions in English, went through thirty editions in French, and was also translated into many other languages. It is best known under the title "The Way to Wealth," and is thoroughly characteristic of Franklin's style.

During this period the many-sidedness of Franklin's activity was amazing. He founded the Philadelphia library, the first subscription library in America; was one of the chief organizers of the educational institution afterwards known as the University of Pennsylvania; became Deputy Postmaster-General in 1753, and as such greatly improved the postal system of the colonies; and finally made his immortal discoveries in electricity. The work of Franklin in behalf of American independence is a matter of history. As early as 1754 he proposed a union of the colonies against the French and Indians. From 1757 to 1775 he was, except for a few months, the agent of Pennsylvania in England. From 1776 to 1785 he represented the American colonies in France, first as the agent of the revolutionary government, later as Minister of the United States. His work in this capacity was in its bearing and final results equalled only by that of Washington's armies. He was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, the treaty of alliance with France, and the treaty of peace. While in France he resumed literary work, and wrote for the amusement of his friends his charming "Bagatelles," of which "The Morals of Chess" is a good example. During this period he wrote his unfinished "Autobiography," the most important of his larger works. He continued active and influential till his death, in 1790, at the age of eighty-four.

## THE WAY TO WEALTH

COURTEOUS reader, I have heard that nothing gives an author so great pleasure as to find his works respectfully quoted by others. Judge, then, how much I must have been gratified by an incident I am going to relate to you. I stopped my horse lately where a great number of people were collected at an auction of merchants' goods. The hour of the sale not being come, they were conversing on the badness of the times; and one of the company called to a plain, clean, old man, with white locks, "Pray, Father Abraham, what think you of the times? Will not these heavy taxes quite ruin the country? How shall we ever be able to pay them? What would you advise us to?" Father Abraham stood up and replied, "If you would have my advice, I will give it you in short; for 'A word to the wise is enough,' as Poor Richard says." They joined in desiring him to speak his mind, and gathering round him, he proceeded as follows:

"Friends," said he, "the taxes are indeed very heavy, and, if those laid on by the government were the only ones we had to pay, we might more easily discharge them; but we have many others, and much more grievous to some of us. We are taxed twice as much by our idleness, three times as much by our pride, and four times as much by our folly; and from these taxes the commissioners cannot ease or deliver us by allowing an abatement. However, let us hearken to good advice, and something may be done for us; 'God helps them that help themselves,' as Poor Richard says.

"I. It would be thought a hard government, that should tax its people one-tenth part of their time, to be employed in its service; but idleness taxes many of us much more; sloth, by bringing on diseases, absolutely shortens life. 'Sloth, like rust, consumes faster than labor wears; while the used key is always bright,' as Poor Richard says. 'But dost thou love life, then

do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of,' as Poor Richard says. How much more than is necessary do we spend in sleep, forgetting, that 'The sleeping fox catches no poultry'; and that 'There will be sleeping enough in the grave,' as Poor Richard says.

" 'If time be of all things the most precious, wasting time must be,' as Poor Richard says, 'the greatest prodigality'; since, as he elsewhere tells us, 'Lost time is never found again; and what we call time enough, always proves little enough.' Let us then up and be doing, and doing to the purpose; so by diligence shall we do more with less perplexity. 'Sloth makes all things difficult, but industry all easy'; and 'He that riseth late must trot all day, and shall scarce overtake his business at night'; while 'Laziness travels so slowly, that Poverty soon overtakes him. Drive thy business, let not that drive thee'; and 'Early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise,' as Poor Richard says.

"So what signifies wishing and hoping for better times? We may make these times better, if we bestir ourselves. 'Industry need not wish, and he that lives upon hopes will die fasting. There are no gains without pains; then help, hands, for I have no lands'; or, if I have, they are smartly taxed. 'He that hath a trade hath an estate; and he that hath a calling, hath an office of profit and honor,' as Poor Richard says; but then the trade must be worked at, and the calling followed, or neither the estate nor the office will enable us to pay our taxes. If we are industrious, we shall never starve; for, 'At the workingman's house hunger looks in, but dares not enter.' Nor will the bailiff or the constable enter, for 'Industry pays debts, while despair increaseth them.' What though you have found no treasure, nor has any rich relation left you a legacy, 'Diligence is the mother of good luck, and God gives all things to industry. Then plough deep while sluggards sleep, and you shall have corn to sell and to keep.' Work while it is called to-day, for you know not how much you may be hindered to-morrow. 'One to-day is worth two to-morrows,' as Poor Richard says; and further, 'Never leave that till to-morrow which you can do to-day.' If you were a servant, would you not be ashamed that a good master should catch you idle? Are you then your own

much to be done for yourself, your family, your country, and your king. Handle your tools without mittens; remember, that 'The cat in gloves catches no mice,' as Poor Richard says. It is true there is much to be done, and perhaps you are weak-handed; but stick to it steadily, and you will see great effects; for 'Constant dropping wears away stones'; and 'By diligence and patience the mouse ate in two the cable'; and 'Little strokes fell great oaks.'

"Methinks I hear some of you say, 'Must a man afford himself no leisure?' I will tell thee, my friend, what Poor Richard says: 'Employ thy time well, if thou meanest to gain leisure; and, since thou art not sure of a minute, throw not away an hour.' Leisure is time for doing something useful; this leisure the diligent man will obtain, but the lazy man never; for 'A life of leisure and a life of laziness are two things. Many, without labor, would live by their wits only, but they break for want of stock'; whereas, industry gives comfort, and plenty, and respect. 'Fly pleasures, and they will follow you. The diligent spinner has a large shift; and now I have a sheep and a cow, everybody bids me good morrow.'

"II. But with our industry we must likewise be steady, settled, and careful, and oversee our own affairs, with our own eyes, and not trust too much to others; for, as Poor Richard says,

'I never saw an oft-removed tree,  
Nor yet an oft-removed family,  
That throve so well as those that settled be.'

And again, 'Three removes are as bad as a fire'; and again, 'Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee'; and again, 'If you would have your business done, go; if not, send.' And again,

'He that by the plough would thrive,  
Himself must either hold or drive.'

And again, 'The eye of a master will do more work than both his hands'; and again, 'Want of care does us more damage than want of knowledge'; and again, 'Not to oversee workmen is to leave them your purse open.' Trusting too much to others' care is the ruin of many; for 'In the affairs of this world men are saved, not by faith, but by the want of it'; but a man's



own care is profitable; for, 'If you would have a faithful servant, and one that you like, serve yourself. A little neglect may breed great mischief; for want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; and for want of a horse the rider was lost, being overtaken and slain by the enemy; all for want of a little care about a horseshoe nail.'

"III. So much for industry, my friends, and attention to one's own business; but to these we must add frugality, if we would make our industry more certainly successful. A man may, if he knows not how to save as he gets, keep his nose all his life to the grindstone, and die not worth a groat at last. 'A fat kitchen makes a lean will'; and

'Many estates are spent in the getting,  
Since women for tea forsook spinning and knitting,  
And men for punch forsook hewing and splitting.'

'If you would be wealthy, think of saving as well as of getting. The Indies have not made Spain rich, because her outgoes are greater than her incomes.'

"Away then with your expensive follies, and you will not then have so much cause to complain of hard times, heavy taxes, and chargeable families; for

'Women and wine, game and deceit,  
Make the wealth small and the want great.'

And further, 'What maintains one vice would bring up two children.' You may think, perhaps, that a little tea, or a little punch now and then, diet a little more costly, clothes a little finer, and a little entertainment now and then, can be no great matter; but remember, 'Many a little makes a mickle.' Beware of little expenses; 'A small leak will sink a great ship,' as Poor Richard says; and again, 'Who dainties love, shall beggars prove'; and moreover, 'Fools make feasts, and wise men eat them.'

"Here you are all got together at this sale of fineries and knick-knacks. You call them goods; but, if you do not take care, they will prove evils to some of you. You expect they will be sold cheap, and perhaps they may for less than they cost; but, if you have no occasion for them, they must be dear to you. Remember what Poor Richard says: 'Buy what thou hast no

need of, and ere long thou shalt sell thy necessities.' And again, 'At a great pennyworth pause a while.' He means, that perhaps the cheapness is apparent only, and not real; or the bargain, by straitening thee in thy business, may do thee more harm than good. For in another place he says, 'Many have been ruined by buying good pennyworths.' Again, 'It is foolish to lay out money in a purchase of repentance'; and yet this folly is practised every day at auctions, for want of minding the 'Almanac.'<sup>1</sup> Many a one, for the sake of finery on the back, has gone with a hungry belly and half-starved their families. 'Silks and satins, scarlet and velvets, put out the kitchen fire,' as Poor Richard says.

"These are not the necessities of life; they can scarcely be called the conveniences; and yet, only because thy look pretty, how many want to have them! By these, and other extravagances, the genteel are reduced to poverty, and forced to borrow of those whom they formerly despised, but who, through industry and frugality, have maintained their standing; in which case it appears plainly, that 'A ploughman on his legs is higher than a gentleman on his knees,' as Poor Richard says. Perhaps they have had a small estate left them, which they knew not the getting of; they think, 'It is day, and will never be night'; that a little to be spent out of so much is not worth minding; but 'Always taking out of the meal-tub, and never putting in, soon comes to the bottom,' as Poor Richard says; and then, 'When the well is dry, they know the worth of water.' But this they might have known before, if they had taken his advice. 'If you would know the value of money, go and try to borrow some; for he that goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing,' as Poor Richard says; and indeed so does he that lends to such people, when he goes to get it in again. Poor Dick further advises and says,

'Fond pride of dress is sure a very curse;  
Ere fancy you consult, consult your purse.'

And again, 'Pride is as loud a beggar as Want, and a great deal more saucy.' When you have bought one fine thing, you must

<sup>1</sup> This refers to "Poor Richard's Almanac," which was published by Benjamin Franklin under the nom de plume of Richard Saunders. "Poor Richard's Almanac"

was issued in 1732 and published annually for about twenty-five years. It attained great popularity.—EDITOR.

buy ten more, that your appearance may be all of a piece; but Poor Dick says, 'It is easier to suppress the first desire, than to satisfy all that follow it.' And it is as truly folly for the poor to ape the rich, as for the frog to swell in order to equal the ox.

'Vessels large may venture more,  
But little boats should keep near shore.'

It is, however, a folly soon punished; for as Poor Richard says, 'Pride that dines on vanity, sups on contempt. Pride breakfasted with Plenty, dined with Poverty, and supped with Infamy.' And, after all, of what use is this pride of appearance, for which so much is risked, so much is suffered? It cannot promote health, nor ease pain; it makes no increase of merit in the person; it creates envy; it hastens misfortune.

"But what madness must it be to run in debt for these superfluities? We are offered, by the terms of this sale, six months' credit, and that, perhaps, has induced some of us to attend it, because we cannot spare the ready money, and hope now to be fine without it. But, ah! think what you do when you run in debt; you give to another power over your liberty. If you cannot pay at the time, you will be ashamed to see your creditor; you will be in fear when you speak to him; you will make poor, pitiful, sneaking excuses, and, by degrees, come to lose your veracity, and sink into base, downright lying; for 'The second vice is lying, the first is running in debt,' as Poor Richard says; and again, to the same purpose, 'Lying rides upon Debt's back': whereas a free-born Englishman ought not to be ashamed nor afraid to see or speak to any man living. But poverty often deprives a man of all spirit and virtue. 'It is hard for an empty bag to stand upright.'

"What would you think of that prince, or of that government, who should issue an edict forbidding you to dress like a gentleman or gentlewoman, on pain of imprisonment or servitude? Would you not say that you were free, have a right to dress as you please, and that such an edict would be a breach of your privileges, and such a government tyrannical? And yet you are about to put yourself under such tyranny, when you run in debt for such dress! Your creditor has authority, at his pleasure, to deprive you of your liberty, by confining you in jail

till you shall be able to pay him. When you have got your bargain, you may, perhaps, think little of payment; but, as Poor Richard says, 'Creditors have better memories than debtors; creditors are a superstitious sect, great observers of set days and times.' The day comes round before you are aware, and the demand is made before you are prepared to satisfy it; or, if you bear your debt in mind, the term, which at first seemed so long, will, as it lessens, appear extremely short. Time will seem to have added wings to his heels as well as his shoulders. 'Those have a short Lent who owe money to be paid at Easter.' At present, perhaps, you may think yourselves in thriving circumstances, and that you can bear a little extravagance without injury; but

'For age and want save while you may;  
No morning sun lasts a whole day.'

Gain may be temporary and uncertain, but ever, while you live, expense is constant and certain; and 'It is easier to build two chimneys, than to keep one in fuel,' as Poor Richard says; so, 'Rather go to bed supperless than rise in debt.'

'Get what you can, and what you get hold;  
'Tis the stone that will turn all your lead into gold.'

And, when you have got the philosopher's stone, sure you will no longer complain of bad times, or the difficulty of paying taxes.

"IV. This doctrine, my friends, is reason and wisdom; but, after all, do not depend too much upon your own industry, and frugality, and prudence, though excellent things; for they may all be blasted, without the blessing of Heaven; and, therefore, ask that blessing humbly, and be not uncharitable to those that at present seem to want it, but comfort and help them. Remember, Job suffered, and was afterwards prosperous.

"And now, to conclude, 'Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other,' as Poor Richard says, and scarce in that; for, it is true, 'We may give advice, but we cannot give conduct.' However, remember this, 'They that will not be counselled, cannot be helped'; and further, that, 'If you will not hear Reason, she will surely rap your knuckles,' as Poor Richard says."

Thus the old gentleman ended his harangue. The people heard it, and approved the doctrine; and immediately practised the contrary, just as if it had been a common sermon; for the auction opened, and they began to buy extravagantly. I found the good man had thoroughly studied my "Almanacs," and digested all I had dropped on these topics during the course of twenty-five years. The frequent mention he made of me must have tired anyone else; but my vanity was wonderfully delighted with it, though I was conscious that not a tenth part of the wisdom was my own, which he ascribed to me, but rather the gleanings that I had made of the sense of all ages and nations. However, I resolved to be the better for the echo of it; and, though I had at first determined to buy stuff for a new coat, I went away resolved to wear my old one a little longer. Reader, if thou wilt do the same, thy profit will be as great as mine.

## MORALS OF CHESS

PLAYING at chess is the most ancient and most universal game known among men; for its original is beyond the memory of history, and it has, for numberless ages, been the amusement of all the civilized nations of Asia, the Persians, the Indians, and the Chinese. Europe has had it above a thousand years; the Spaniards have spread it over their part of America; and it has lately begun to make its appearance in the United States. It is so interesting in itself as not to need the view of gain to induce engaging in it; and thence it is seldom played for money. Those, therefore, who have leisure for such diversions, cannot find one that is more innocent; and the following piece, written with a view to correct (among a few young friends) some little improprieties in the practice of it, shows at the same time that it may, in its effects on the mind, be not merely innocent, but advantageous, to the vanquished as well as the victor.

The game of chess is not merely an idle amusement. Several very valuable qualities of the mind, useful in the course of human life, are to be acquired or strengthened by it, so as to become habits, ready on all occasions. For life is a kind of chess, in which we have often points to gain, and competitors or adversaries to contend with, and in which there is a vast variety of good and evil events, that are in some degree the effects of prudence or the want of it. By playing at chess, then, we may learn—

I. *Foresight*, which looks a little into futurity, and considers the consequences that may attend an action; for it is continually occurring to the player, “If I move this piece, what will be the advantage of my new situation? What use can my adversary make of it to annoy me? What other moves can I make to support it, and to defend myself from his attacks?”

II. *Circumspection*, which surveys the whole chessboard, or

scene of action ; the relations of the several pieces and situations, the dangers they are respectively exposed to, the several possibilities of their aiding each other, the probabilities that the adversary may make this or that move, and attack this or the other piece, and what different means can be used to avoid his stroke, or turn its consequences against him.

III. *Caution*, not to make our moves too hastily. This habit is best acquired by observing strictly the laws of the game ; such as, " If you touch a piece, you must move it somewhere ; if you set it down, you must let it stand " ; and it is therefore best that these rules should be observed, as the game thereby becomes more the image of human life, and particularly of war ; in which, if you have incautiously put yourself into a bad and dangerous position, you cannot obtain your enemy's leave to withdraw your troops, and place them more securely, but you must abide all the consequences of your rashness.

And, lastly, we learn by chess the habit of not being discouraged by present appearances in the state of our affairs, the habit of hoping for a favorable change, and that of persevering in the search of resources. The game is so full of events, there is such a variety of turns in it, the fortune of it is so subject to sudden vicissitudes, and one so frequently, after long contemplation, discovers the means of extricating one's self from a supposed insurmountable difficulty, that one is encouraged to continue the contest to the last, in hopes of victory by our own skill, or at least of getting a stale-mate,<sup>1</sup> by the negligence of our adversary. And whoever considers, what in chess he often sees instances of, that particular pieces of success are apt to produce presumption, and its consequent inattention, by which the losses may be recovered, will learn not to be too much discouraged by the present success of his adversary, nor to despair of final good fortune upon every little check he receives in the pursuit of it.

That we may therefore be induced more frequently to choose this beneficial amusement, in preference to others which are not attended with the same advantages, every circumstance which may increase the pleasures of it should be regarded ; and every action or word that is unfair, disrespectful, or that in any way may give uneasiness, should be avoided, as contrary to the im-

<sup>1</sup> When the King is so situated that he cannot move without going into check, and

is not in check at the time, it is termed stale-mate, which counts as a drawn game.

mediate intention of both the players, which is to pass the time agreeably.

Therefore, first, if it is agreed to play according to the strict rules, then those rules are to be exactly observed by both parties, and should not be insisted on for one side, while deviated from by the other, for this is not equitable.

Secondly, if it is agreed not to observe the rules exactly, but one party demands indulgences, he should then be as willing to allow them to the other.

Thirdly, no false move should ever be made to extricate yourself out of difficulty, or to gain an advantage. There can be no pleasure in playing with a person once detected in such unfair practice.

Fourthly, if your adversary is long in playing, you ought not to hurry him, or express any uneasiness at his delay. You should not sing, nor whistle, nor look at your watch, nor take up a book to read, nor make a tapping with your feet on the floor, or with your fingers on the table, nor do anything that may disturb his attention. For all these things displease; and they do not show your skill in playing, but your craftiness or your rudeness.

Fifthly, you ought not to endeavor to amuse and deceive your adversary, by pretending to have made bad moves, and saying, that you have now lost the game, in order to make him secure and careless, and inattentive to your schemes; for this is fraud and deceit, not skill in the game.

Sixthly, you must not, when you have gained a victory, use any triumphing or insulting expression, nor show too much pleasure; but endeavor to console your adversary, and make him less dissatisfied with himself, by every kind of civil expression that may be used with truth, such as, "You understand the game better than I, but you are a little inattentive"; or, "You play too fast"; or, "You had the best of the game, but something happened to divert your thoughts, and that turned it in my favor."

Seventhly, if you are a spectator while others play, observe the most perfect silence. For, if you give advice, you offend both parties, him against whom you give it, because it may cause the loss of his game, him in whose favor you may give it, because, though it be good, and he follows it, he loses the pleasure



he might have had, if you had permitted him to think until it had occurred to himself. Even after a move or moves, you must not, by replacing the pieces, show how they might have been placed better; for that displeases, and may occasion disputes and doubts about their true situation. All talking to the players lessens or diverts their attention, and is therefore displeasing. Nor should you give the least hint to either party, by any kind of noise or motion. If you do, you are unworthy to be a spectator. If you have a mind to exercise or show your judgment, do it in playing your own game, when you have an opportunity, not in criticising, or meddling with, or counselling the play of others.

Lastly, if the game is not to be played rigorously, according to the rules above mentioned, then moderate your desire of victory over your adversary, and be pleased with one over yourself. Snatch not eagerly at every advantage offered by his unskilfulness or inattention; but point out to him kindly, that by such a move he places or leaves a piece in danger and unsupported; that by another he will put his king in a perilous situation, etc. By this generous civility (so opposite to the unfairness above forbidden) you may, indeed, happen to lose the game to your opponent; but you will win, what is better, his esteem, his respect, and his affection, together with the silent approbation and good-will of impartial spectators.

**SELF-CULTURE**

—

BY

**WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING**

## WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

1780—1842

The greatest organizer of the Unitarian movement in America, William Ellery Channing, was born at Newport, Rhode Island, in 1780. He was prepared for college under the tuition of his uncle, the Rev. Henry Channing, and entered Harvard in 1794. He was precocious as a boy, and later thorough as a student, but of a delicate constitution. When only twenty-three years old he became pastor of the Federal Street Church in Boston, and in a few years had won a wide fame for eloquence, and put himself at the head of the Unitarian party in the schism of the Congregational Church. In 1822 Channing made an extended tour in Europe, bringing back with him perhaps more of the spirit of Old World culture than any American that had been abroad.

Not only were his pulpit discourses powerful and stimulating far beyond those of any of his contemporaries, still in bondage to the narrow theology of the Mathers, but his published writings on topics other than divinity were widely read and appreciated. In his essay on "Self-Culture" Channing advocated the study of foreign literature, and insisted strongly on the importance of a more thorough culture. He looked upon self-culture as a religious duty, and pointed out and defined the connection between moral and intellectual culture. In his admirable essays on Napoleon, Milton and Fénelon, Dr. Channing contributed to American literature critical essays of genuine merit. These articles, which were first published in the "Christian Examiner," broadened the literary horizon of many American thinkers, and thus incited many to the attainment of that culture for which Channing so earnestly pleaded.

Dr. Channing was a friend of the father of Emerson, and a classmate and friend of the father of Longfellow. His influence on the minds of his contemporaries was remarkable, and can only be appreciated at the present day by remembering what a dearth of real literary ability there was in this country in his time. In 1830 Dr. Channing published "Discourses, Reviews, and Miscellanies." In later collections of his works many additional articles were printed, bringing the complete edition of his works up to six volumes. He died at Bennington, Vermont, in 1842.

## SELF-CULTURE

**M**Y RESPECTED FRIENDS: By the invitation of the committee of arrangements for the Franklin Lectures I now appear before you to offer some remarks introductory to this course.<sup>1</sup> My principal inducement for doing so is my deep interest in those of my fellow-citizens for whom these lectures are principally designed. I understood that they were to be attended chiefly by those who are occupied by manual labor; and, hearing this, I did not feel myself at liberty to decline the service to which I had been invited. I wished by compliance to express my sympathy with this large portion of my race. I wished to express my sense of obligation to those from whose industry and skill I derive almost all the comforts of life. I wished still more to express my joy in the efforts they are making for their own improvement, and my firm faith in their success. These motives will give a particular character and bearing to some of my remarks. I shall speak occasionally as among those who live by the labor of their hands. But I shall not speak as one separated from them. I belong rightfully to the great fraternity of working men. Happily in this community we all are bred and born to work; and this honorable mark, set on us all, should bind together the various portions of the community.

I have expressed my strong interest in the mass of the people; and this is founded, not on their usefulness to the community, so much as on what they are in themselves. Their condition is indeed obscure; but their importance is not on this account a whit the less. The multitude of men cannot, from the nature of the case, be distinguished; for the very idea of distinction is, that a man stands out from the multitude. They make little noise and draw little notice in their narrow spheres of action; but still they have their full pro-

<sup>1</sup> This essay was originally delivered at Boston in September, 1838, as an introductory address to the Franklin Lectures.

common among the multitude, whose names are never heard. Among common people will be found more of hardship borne manfully, more of unvarnished truth, more of religious trust, more of that generosity which gives what the giver needs himself, and more of a wise estimate of life and death, than among the more prosperous. And even in regard to influence over other beings, which is thought the peculiar prerogative of distinguished station, I believe that the difference between the conspicuous and the obscure does not amount to much. Influence is to be measured, not by the extent of surface it covers, but by its kind. A man may spread his mind, his feelings, and opinions, through a great extent; but if his mind be a low one, he manifests no greatness. A wretched artist may fill a city with daubs, and by a false, showy style achieve a reputation; but the man of genius, who leaves behind him one grand picture, in which immortal beauty is embodied, and which is silently to spread a true taste in his art, exerts an incomparably higher influence. Now the noblest influence on earth is that exerted on character; and he who puts forth this does a great work, no matter how narrow or obscure his sphere. The father and mother of an unnoticed family, who, in their seclusion, awaken the mind of one child to the idea and love of perfect goodness, who awaken in him a strength of will to repel all temptation, and who send him out prepared to profit by the conflicts of life, surpass in influence a Napoleon breaking the world to his sway. And not only is their work higher in kind; who knows but that they are doing a greater work even as to extent of surface than the conqueror? Who knows but that the being whom they inspire with holy and disinterested principles may communicate himself to others; and that, by a spreading agency, of which they were the silent origin, improvements may spread through a nation, through the world? In these remarks you will see why I feel and express a deep interest in the obscure, in the mass of men. The distinctions of society vanish before the light of these truths. I attach myself to the multitude, not because they are voters and have political power; but because they are men, and have within their reach the most glorious prizes of humanity.

In this country the mass of the people are distinguished by possessing means of improvement, of self-culture, possessed

nowhere else. To incite them to the use of these is to render them the best service they can receive. Accordingly, I have chosen for the subject of this lecture Self-Culture, or the care which every man owes to himself, to the unfolding and perfecting of his nature. I consider this topic as particularly appropriate to the introduction of a course of lectures, in consequence of a common disposition to regard these and other like means of instruction as able of themselves to carry forward the hearer. Lectures have their use. They stir up many who, but for such outward appeals, might have slumbered to the end of life. But let it be remembered that little is to be gained simply by coming to this place once a week, and giving up the mind for an hour to be wrought upon by a teacher. Unless we are roused to act upon ourselves, unless we engage in the work of self-improvement, unless we purpose strenuously to form and elevate our own minds, unless what we hear is made a part of ourselves by conscientious reflection, very little permanent good is received.

Self-culture, I am aware, is a topic too extensive for a single discourse, and I shall be able to present but a few views which seem to me most important. My aim will be, to give first the idea of self-culture, next its means, and then to consider some objections to the leading views which I am now to lay before you.

Before entering on the discussion, let me offer one remark. Self-culture is something possible. It is not a dream. It has foundations in our nature. Without this conviction the speaker will but declaim, and the hearer listen without profit. There are two powers of the human soul which make self-culture possible—the self-searching and the self-forming power. We have first the faculty of turning the mind on itself; of recalling its past, and watching its present operations; of learning its various capacities and susceptibilities, what it can do and bear, what it can enjoy and suffer; and of thus learning in general what our nature is, and what it was made for. It is worthy of observation that we are able to discern not only what we already are, but what we may become, to see in ourselves germs and promises of a growth to which no bounds can be set, to dart beyond what we have actually gained to the idea of perfection as the end of our being. It is by this self-comprehending power that we are distinguished from the brutes, which give no signs

of looking into themselves. Without this there would be no self-culture, for we should not know the work to be done; and one reason why self-culture is so little proposed is, that so few penetrate into their own nature. To most men their own spirits are shadowy, unreal, compared with what is outward. When they happen to cast a glance inward, they see there only a dark, vague chaos. They distinguish, perhaps, some violent passion, which has driven them to injurious excess; but their highest powers hardly attract a thought; and thus multitudes live and die as truly strangers to themselves as to countries of which they have heard the name, but which human foot has never trodden.

But self-culture is possible, not only because we can enter into and search ourselves. We have a still nobler power, that of acting on, determining, and forming ourselves. This is a fearful as well as glorious endowment, for it is the ground of human responsibility. We have the power not only of tracing our powers, but of guiding and impelling them; not only of watching our possessions, but of controlling them; not only of seeing our faculties grow, but of applying to them means and influences to aid their growth. We can stay or change the current of thought. We can concentrate the intellect on objects which we wish to comprehend. We can fix our eyes on perfection, and make almost everything speed towards it. This is, indeed, a noble prerogative of our nature. Possessing this, it matters little what or where we are now, for we can conquer a better lot, and even be happier for starting from the lowest point. Of all the discoveries which men need to make, the most important, at the present moment, is that of the self-forming power treasured up in themselves. They little suspect its extent, as little as the savage apprehends the energy which the mind is created to exert on the material world. It transcends in importance all our power over outward nature. There is more of divinity in it than in the force which impels the outward universe; and yet how little we comprehend it! How it slumbers in most men unsuspected, unused! This makes self-culture possible, and binds it on us as a solemn duty.

I. I am first to unfold the idea of self-culture; and this, in its most general form, may easily be seized. To cultivate anything, be it a plant, an animal, a mind, is to make grow,

Growth, expansion, is the end. Nothing admits culture but that which has a principle of life, capable of being expanded. He, therefore, who does what he can to unfold all his powers and capacities, especially his nobler ones, so as to become a well-proportioned, vigorous, excellent, happy being, practices self-culture.

This culture, of course, has various branches corresponding to the different capacities of human nature; but, though various, they are intimately united, and make progress together. The soul, which our philosophy divides into various capacities, is still one essence, one life; and it exerts at the same moment, and blends in the same act, its various energies of thought, feeling, and volition. Accordingly, in a wise self-culture, all the principles of our nature grow at once by joint, harmonious action, just as all parts of the plant are unfolded together. When, therefore, you hear of different branches of self-improvement, you will not think of them as distinct processes going on independently of each other, and requiring each its own separate means. Still a distinct consideration of these is needed to a full comprehension of the subject, and these I shall proceed to unfold.

First, self-culture is moral, a branch of singular importance. When a man looks into himself, he discovers two distinct orders or kinds of principles, which it behooves him especially to comprehend. He discovers desires, appetites, passions, which terminate in himself, which crave and seek his own interest, gratification, distinction; and he discovers another principle, an antagonist to these, which is impartial, disinterested, universal, enjoining on him a regard to the rights and happiness of other beings, and laying on him obligations which must be discharged, cost what they may, or however they may clash with his particular pleasure or gain. No man, however narrowed to his own interest, however hardened by selfishness, can deny that there springs up within him a great idea in opposition to interest, the idea of duty, that an inward voice calls him, more or less distinctly, to revere and exercise impartial justice and universal good-will. This disinterested principle in human nature we call sometimes reason, sometimes conscience, sometimes the moral sense or faculty. But, be its name what it may, it is a real principle in each of us, and it is the supreme power within



us, to be cultivated above all others, for on its culture the right development of all others depends. The passions indeed may be stronger than the conscience, may lift up a louder voice; but their clamor differs wholly from the tone of command in which the conscience speaks. They are not clothed with its authority, its binding power. In their very triumphs they are rebuked by the moral principle, and often cower before its still, deep, menacing voice. No part of self-knowledge is more important than to discern clearly these two great principles, the self-seeking and the disinterested; and the most important part of self-culture is to depress the former, and to exalt the latter, or to enthrone the sense of duty within us. There are no limits to the growth of this moral force in man, if he will cherish it faithfully. There have been men, whom no power in the universe could turn from the right, by whom death in its most dreadful forms has been less dreaded than transgression of the inward law of universal justice and love.

In the next place, self-culture is religious. When we look into ourselves we discover powers which link us with this outward, visible, finite, ever-changing world. We have sight and other senses to discern, and limbs and various faculties to secure and appropriate the material creation. And we have, too, a power which cannot stop at what we see and handle, at what exists within the bounds of space and time, which seeks for the infinite, uncreated cause, which cannot rest till it ascend to the eternal, all-comprehending mind. This we call the religious principle, and its grandeur cannot be exaggerated by human language; for it marks out a being destined for higher communion than with the visible universe. To develop this is eminently to educate ourselves. The true idea of God, unfolded clearly and livingly within us, and moving us to adore and obey him, and to aspire after likeness to him, is the noblest growth in human, and, I may add, in celestial natures. The religious principle and the moral are intimately connected, and grow together. The former is indeed the perfection and highest manifestation of the latter. They are both disinterested. It is the essence of true religion to recognize and adore in God the attributes of impartial justice and universal love, and to hear him commanding us in the conscience to become what we adore.

Again. Self-culture is intellectual. We cannot look into

ourselves without discovering the intellectual principle, the power which thinks, reasons, and judges, the power of seeking and acquiring truth. This, indeed, we are in no danger of overlooking. The intellect being the great instrument by which men compass their wishes, it draws more attention than any of our other powers. When we speak to men of improving themselves, the first thought which occurs to them is, that they must cultivate their understanding, and get knowledge and skill. By education, men mean almost exclusively intellectual training. For this, schools and colleges are instituted, and to this the moral and religious discipline of the young is sacrificed. Now I reverence, as much as any man, the intellect; but let us never exalt it above the moral principle. With this it is most intimately connected. In this its culture is founded, and to exalt this is its highest aim. Whoever desires that his intellect may grow up to soundness, to healthy vigor, must begin with moral discipline. Reading and study are not enough to perfect the power of thought. One thing above all is needful, and that is, the disinterestedness which is the very soul of virtue. To gain truth, which is the great object of the understanding, I must seek it disinterestedly. Here is the first and grand condition of intellectual progress. I must choose to receive the truth, no matter how it bears on myself. I must follow it, no matter where it leads, what interests it opposes, to what persecution or loss it lays me open, from what party it severs me, or to what party it allies. Without this fairness of mind, which is only another phrase for disinterested love of truth, great native powers of understanding are perverted and led astray; genius runs wild; "the light within us becomes darkness." The subtlest reasoners, for want of this, cheat themselves as well as others, and become entangled in the web of their own sophistry. It is a fact well known in the history of science and philosophy, that men, gifted by nature with singular intelligence, have broached the grossest errors, and even sought to undermine the grand primitive truths on which human virtue, dignity, and hope depend. And, on the other hand, I have known instances of men of naturally moderate powers of mind who, by a disinterested love of truth and their fellow-creatures, have gradually risen to no small force and enlargement of thought. Some of the most useful teachers in the pulpit and in schools have owed their

power of enlightening others, not so much to any natural superiority as to the simplicity, impartiality, and disinterestedness of their minds, to their readiness to live and die for the truth. A man who rises above himself looks from an eminence on nature and providence, on society and life. Thought expands, as by a natural elasticity, when the pressure of selfishness is removed. The moral and religious principles of the soul, generously cultivated, fertilize the intellect. Duty, faithfully performed, opens the mind to truth, both being of one family, alike immutable, universal, and everlasting.

I have enlarged on this subject, because the connection between moral and intellectual culture is often overlooked, and because the former is often sacrificed to the latter. The exaltation of talent, as it is called, above virtue and religion, is the curse of the age. Education is now chiefly a stimulus to learning, and thus men acquire power without the principles which alone make it a good. Talent is worshipped; but, if divorced from rectitude, it will prove more of a demon than a god.

Intellectual culture consists, not chiefly, as many are apt to think, in accumulating information, though this is important, but in building up a force of thought which may be turned at will on any subjects on which we are called to pass judgment. This force is manifested in the concentration of the attention, in accurate, penetrating observation, in reducing complex subjects to their elements, in diving beneath the effect to the cause, in detecting the more subtle differences and resemblances of things, in reading the future in the present and especially in rising from particular facts to general laws or universal truths. This last exertion of the intellect, its rising to broad views and great principles, constitutes what is called the philosophical mind, and is especially worthy of culture. What it means, your own observation must have taught you. You must have taken note of two classes of men, the one always employed on details, on particular facts, and the other using these facts as foundations of higher, wider truths. The latter are philosophers. For example, men had for ages seen pieces of wood, stones, metals falling to the ground. Newton seized on these particular facts, and rose to the idea that all matter tends, or is attracted, towards all matter, and then defined the law according to which this attraction or force acts at different distances, thus

- giving us a grand principle, which, we have reason to think, extends to and controls the whole outward creation. One man reads a history, and can tell you all its events, and there stops. Another combines these events, brings them under one view, and learns the great causes which are at wor' on this or another nation, and what are its great tendencies, whether to freedom or despotism, to one or another form of civilization. So, one man talks continually about the particular actions of this or another neighbor; whilst another looks beyond the acts to the inward principle from which they spring, and gathers from them larger views of human nature. In a word, one man sees all things apart and in fragments, whilst another strives to discover the harmony, connection, unity of all. One of the great evils of society is, that men, occupied perpetually with petty details, want general truths, want broad and fixed principles. Hence many, not wicked, are unstable, habitually inconsistent, as if they were overgrown children rather than men. To build up that strength of mind which apprehends and cleaves to great universal truths, is the highest intellectual self-culture; and here I wish you to observe how entirely this culture agrees with that of the moral and the religious principles of our nature, of which I have previously spoken. In each of these, the improvement of the soul consists in raising it above what is narrow, particular, individual, selfish, to the universal and unconfined. To improve a man is to liberalize, enlarge him in thought, feeling, and purpose. Narrowness of intellect and heart, this is the degradation from which all culture aims to rescue the human being.

Again. Self-culture is social, or one of its great offices is to unfold and purify the affections which spring up instinctively in the human breast, which bind together husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister; which bind a man to friends and neighbors, to his country, and to the suffering who fall under his eye, wherever they belong. The culture of these is an important part of our work, and it consists in converting them from instincts into principles, from natural into spiritual attachments, in giving them a rational, moral, and holy character. For example, our affection for our children is at first instinctive; and if it continue such, it rises little above the brute's attachment to its young. But when a parent infuses into his

natural love for his offspring moral and religious principle; when he comes to regard his child as an intelligent, spiritual, immortal being, and honors him as such, and desires first of all to make him disinterested, noble, a worthy child of God and the friend of his race, then the instinct rises into a generous and holy sentiment. It resembles God's paternal love for his spiritual family. A like purity and dignity we must aim to give to all our affections.

Again. Self-culture is practical, or it proposes, as one of its chief ends, to fit us for action, to make us efficient in whatever we undertake, to train us to firmness of purpose and to fruitfulness of resource in common life, and especially in emergencies, in times of difficulty, danger, and trial. But passing over this and other topics for which I have no time, I shall confine myself to two branches of self-culture which have been almost wholly overlooked in the education of the people, and which ought not to be so slighted.

In looking at our nature, we discover, among its admirable endowments, the sense or perception of beauty. We see the germ of this in every human being, and there is no power which admits greater cultivation; and why should it not be cherished in all? It deserves remark, that the provision for this principle is infinite in the universe. There is but a very minute portion of the creation which we can turn into food and clothes, or gratification for the body; but the whole creation may be used to minister to the sense of beauty. Beauty is an all-pervading presence. It unfolds in the numberless flowers of the spring. It waves in the branches of the trees and the green blades of grass. It haunts the depths of the earth and sea, and gleams out in the hues of the shell and the precious stone. And not only these minute objects, but the ocean, the mountains, the clouds, the heavens, the stars, the rising and setting sun, all overflow with beauty. The universe is its temple; and those men who are alive to it cannot lift their eyes without feeling themselves encompassed with it on every side. Now this beauty is so precious, the enjoyments it gives are so refined and pure, so congenial with our tenderest and noble feelings, and so akin to worship, that it is painful to think of the multitude of men as living in the midst of it, and living almost as blind to it as if, instead of this fair earth and glorious sky, they were

tenants of a dungeon. An infinite joy is lost to the world by the want of culture of this spiritual endowment. Suppose that I were to visit a cottage, and to see its walls lined with the choicest pictures of Raphael, and every spare nook filled with statues of the most exquisite workmanship, and that I were to learn that neither man, woman, nor child ever cast an eye at these miracles of art, how should I feel their privation!—how should I want to open their eyes, and to help them to comprehend and feel the loveliness and grandeur which in vain courted their notice! But every husbandman is living in sight of the works of a diviner artist; and how much would his existence be elevated could he see the glory which shines forth in their forms, hues, proportions, and moral expression! I have spoken only of the beauty of nature; but how much of this mysterious charm is found in the elegant arts, and especially in literature! The best books have most beauty. The greatest truths are wronged if not linked with beauty, and they win their way most surely and deeply into the soul when arrayed in this their natural and fit attire. Now no man receives the true culture of a man in whom the sensibility to the beautiful is not cherished; and I know of no condition in life from which it should be excluded. Of all luxuries, this is the cheapest and most at hand; and it seems to me to be most important to those conditions where coarse labor tends to give a grossness to the mind. From the diffusion of the sense of beauty in ancient Greece, and of the taste for music in modern Germany, we learn that the people at large may partake of refined gratifications which have hitherto been thought to be necessarily restricted to a few.

What beauty is, is a question which the most penetrating minds have not satisfactorily answered; nor, were I able, is this the place for discussing it. But one thing I would say; the beauty of the outward creation is intimately related to the lovely, grand, interesting attributes of the soul. It is the emblem or expression of these. Matter becomes beautiful to us when it seems to lose its material aspect, its inertness, finiteness, and grossness, and by the ethereal lightness of its forms and motions seems to approach spirit; when it images to us pure and gentle affections; when it spreads out into a vastness which is a shadow of the Infinite; or when in more awful shapes and movements it speaks of the Omnipotent. Thus outward beauty is akin to

something deeper and unseen, is the reflection of spiritual attributes; and of consequence the way to see and feel it more and more keenly is to cultivate those moral, religious, intellectual, and social principles of which I have already spoken, and which are the glory of the spiritual nature; and I name this that you may see, what I am anxious to show, the harmony which subsists among all branches of human culture, or how each forwards and is aided by all.

There is another power, which each man should cultivate according to his ability, but which is very much neglected in the mass of the people, and that is, the power of utterance. A man was not made to shut up his mind in itself; but to give it voice and to exchange it for other minds. Speech is one of our grand distinctions from the brute. Our power over others lies not so much in the amount of thought within us as in the power of bringing it out. A man of more than ordinary intellectual vigor may, for want of expression, be a cipher, without significance, in society. And not only does a man influence others, but he greatly aids his own intellect by giving distinct and forcible utterance to his thoughts. We understand ourselves better, our conceptions grow clearer, by the very effort to make them clear to another. Our social rank, too, depends a good deal on our power of utterance. The principal distinction between what are called gentlemen and the vulgar lies in this, that the latter are awkward in manners, and are especially wanting in propriety, clearness, grace, and force of utterance. A man who cannot open his lips without breaking a rule of grammar, without showing in his dialect or brogue or uncouth tones his want of cultivation, or without darkening his meaning by a confused, unskilful mode of communication, cannot take the place to which, perhaps, his native good sense entitles him. To have intercourse with respectable people, we must speak their language. On this account, I am glad that grammar and a correct pronunciation are taught in the common schools of this city. These are not trifles; nor are they superfluous to any class of people. They give a man access to social advantages, on which his improvement very much depends. The power of utterance should be included by all in their plans of self-culture.

I have now given a few views of the culture, the improvement, which every man should propose to himself. I have all

- along gone on the principle that a man has within him capacities of growth which deserve and will reward intense, unrelaxing toil. I do not look on a human being as a machine, made to be kept in action by a foreign force, to accomplish an unvarying succession of motions, to do a fixed amount of work, and then to fall to pieces at death, but as a being of free spiritual powers; and I place little value on any culture but that which aims to bring out these, and to give them perpetual impulse and expansion. I am aware that this view is far from being universal. The common notion has been that the mass of the people need no other culture than is necessary to fit them for their various trades; and, though this error is passing away, it is far from being exploded. But the ground of a man's culture lies in his nature, not in his calling. His powers are to be unfolded on account of their inherent dignity, not their outward direction. He is to be educated because he is a man, not because he is to make shoes, nails, or pins. A trade is plainly not the great end of his being, for his mind cannot be shut up in it; his force of thought cannot be exhausted on it. He has faculties to which it gives no action, and deep wants it cannot answer. Poems, and systems of theology and philosophy, which have made some noise in the world, have been wrought at the work-bench and amidst the toils of the field. How often, when the arms are mechanically plying a trade, does the mind, lost in reverie or day-dreams, escape to the ends of the earth! How often does the pious heart of woman mingle the greatest of all thoughts, that of God, with household drudgery! Undoubtedly a man is to perfect himself in his trade, for by it he is to earn his bread and to serve the community. But bread or subsistence is not his highest good; for, if it were, his lot would be harder than that of the inferior animals, for whom nature spreads a table and weaves a wardrobe, without a care of their own. Nor was he made chiefly to minister to the wants of the community. A rational, moral being cannot, without infinite wrong, be converted into a mere instrument of others' gratification. He is necessarily an end, not a means. A mind, in which are sown the seeds of wisdom, disinterestedness, firmness of purpose, and piety, is worth more than all the outward material interests of a world. It exists for itself, for its own perfection, and must not be enslaved to its own or others' animal wants. You tell



something deeper and unseen, is the reflection of spiritual attributes; and of consequence the way to see and feel it more and more keenly is to cultivate those moral, religious, intellectual, and social principles of which I have already spoken, and which are the glory of the spiritual nature; and I name this that you may see, what I am anxious to show, the harmony which subsists among all branches of human culture, or how each forwards and is aided by all.

There is another power, which each man should cultivate according to his ability, but which is very much neglected in the mass of the people, and that is, the power of utterance. A man was not made to shut up his mind in itself; but to give it voice and to exchange it for other minds. Speech is one of our grand distinctions from the brute. Our power over others lies not so much in the amount of thought within us as in the power of bringing it out. A man of more than ordinary intellectual vigor may, for want of expression, be a cipher, without significance, in society. And not only does a man influence others, but he greatly aids his own intellect by giving distinct and forcible utterance to his thoughts. We understand ourselves better, our conceptions grow clearer, by the very effort to make them clear to another. Our social rank, too, depends a good deal on our power of utterance. The principal distinction between what are called gentlemen and the vulgar lies in this, that the latter are awkward in manners, and are especially wanting in propriety, clearness, grace, and force of utterance. A man who cannot open his lips without breaking a rule of grammar, without showing in his dialect or brogue or uncouth tones his want of cultivation, or without darkening his meaning by a confused, unskilful mode of communication, cannot take the place to which, perhaps, his native good sense entitles him. To have intercourse with respectable people, we must speak their language. On this account, I am glad that grammar and a correct pronunciation are taught in the common schools of this city. These are not trifles; nor are they superfluous to any class of people. They give a man access to social advantages, on which his improvement very much depends. The power of utterance should be included by all in their plans of self-culture.

I have now given a few views of the culture, the improvement, which every man should propose to himself. I have all

- along gone on the principle that a man has within him capacities of growth which deserve and will reward intense, unrelaxing toil. I do not look on a human being as a machine, made to be kept in action by a foreign force, to accomplish an unvarying succession of motions, to do a fixed amount of work, and then to fall to pieces at death, but as a being of free spiritual powers; and I place little value on any culture but that which aims to bring out these, and to give them perpetual impulse and expansion. I am aware that this view is far from being universal. The common notion has been that the mass of the people need no other culture than is necessary to fit them for their various trades; and, though this error is passing away, it is far from being exploded. But the ground of a man's culture lies in his nature, not in his calling. His powers are to be unfolded on account of their inherent dignity, not their outward direction. He is to be educated because he is a man, not because he is to make shoes, nails, or pins. A trade is plainly not the great end of his being, for his mind cannot be shut up in it; his force of thought cannot be exhausted on it. He has faculties to which it gives no action, and deep wants it cannot answer. Poems, and systems of theology and philosophy, which have made some noise in the world, have been wrought at the work-bench and amidst the toils of the field. How often, when the arms are mechanically plying a trade, does the mind, lost in reverie or day-dreams, escape to the ends of the earth! How often does the pious heart of woman mingle the greatest of all thoughts, that of God, with household drudgery! Undoubtedly a man is to perfect himself in his trade, for by it he is to earn his bread and to serve the community. But bread or subsistence is not his highest good; for, if it were, his lot would be harder than that of the inferior animals, for whom nature spreads a table and weaves a wardrobe, without a care of their own. Nor was he made chiefly to minister to the wants of the community. A rational, moral being cannot, without infinite wrong, be converted into a mere instrument of others' gratification. He is necessarily an end, not a means. A mind, in which are sown the seeds of wisdom, disinterestedness, firmness of purpose, and piety, is worth more than all the outward material interests of a world. It exists for itself, for its own perfection, and must not be enslaved to its own or others' animal wants. You tell

me that a liberal culture is needed for men who are to fill high stations, but not for such as are doomed to vulgar labor. I answer, that man is a greater name than president or king. Truth and goodness are equally precious in whatever sphere they are found. Besides, men of all conditions sustain equally the relations which give birth to the highest virtues and demand the highest powers. The laborer is not a mere laborer. He has close, tender, responsible connections with God and his fellow-creatures. He is a son, husband, father, friend, and Christian. He belongs to a home, a country, a church, a race; and is such a man to be cultivated only for a trade? Was he not sent into the world for a great work? To educate a child perfectly requires profounder thought, greater wisdom, than to govern a State; and for this plain reason, that the interests and wants of the latter are more superficial, coarser, and more obvious than the spiritual capacities, the growth of thought and feeling, and the subtle laws of the mind, which must all be studied and comprehended before the work of education can be thoroughly performed; and yet to all conditions this greatest work on earth is equally committed by God. What plainer proof do we need that a higher culture than has yet been dreamed of is needed by our whole race?

II. I now proceed to inquire into the means by which the self-culture just described may be promoted; and here I know not where to begin. The subject is so extensive, as well as important, that I feel myself unable to do any justice to it, especially in the limits to which I am confined. I beg you to consider me as presenting but hints, and such as have offered themselves with very little research to my own mind.

And, first, the great means of self-culture, that which includes all the rest, is to fasten on this culture as our great end, to determine deliberately and solemnly that we will make the most and the best of the powers which God has given us. Without this resolute purpose, the best means are worth little, and with it the poorest become mighty. You may see thousands, with every opportunity of improvement which wealth can gather, with teachers, libraries, and apparatus, bringing nothing to pass, and others, with few helps, doing wonders; and simply because the latter are in earnest, and the former not. A man in earnest finds means, or, if he cannot find, creates them. A

vigorous purpose makes much out of little, breathes power into weak instruments, disarms difficulties, and even turns them into assistances. Every condition has means of progress, if we have spirit enough to use them. Some volumes have recently been published, giving examples or histories of "knowledge acquired under difficulties;" and it is most animating to see in these what a resolute man can do for himself. A great idea, like this of self-culture, if seized on clearly and vigorously, burns like a living coal in the soul. He who deliberately adopts a great end, has, by this act, half accomplished it, has scaled the chief barrier to success.

One thing is essential to the strong purpose of self-culture now insisted on; namely, faith in the practicableness of this culture. A great object, to awaken resolute choice, must be seen to be within our reach. The truth, that progress is the very end of our being, must not be received as a tradition, but comprehended and felt as a reality. Our minds are apt to pine and starve, by being imprisoned within what we have already attained. A true faith, looking up to something better, catching glimpses of a distant perfection, prophesying to ourselves improvements proportioned to our conscientious labors, gives energy of purpose, gives wings to the soul; and this faith will continually grow, by acquainting ourselves with our own nature, and with the promises of divine help and immortal life which abound in revelation.

Some are discouraged from proposing to themselves improvement, by the false notion that the study of books, which their situation denies them, is the all-important and only sufficient means. Let such consider that the grand volumes, of which all our books are transcripts—I mean nature, revelation, the human soul, and human life—are freely unfolded to every eye. The great sources of wisdom are experience and observation; and these are denied to none. To open and fix our eyes upon what passes without and within us is the most fruitful study. Books are chiefly useful as they help us to interpret what we see and experience. When they absorb men, as they sometimes do, and turn them from observation of nature and life, they generate a learned folly, for which the plain sense of the laborer could not be exchanged but at great loss. It deserves attention that the greatest men have been formed without

the studies which at present are thought by many most needful to improvement. Homer, Plato, Demosthenes, never heard the name of chemistry, and knew less of the solar system than a boy in our common schools. Not that these sciences are unimportant; but the lesson is, that human improvement never wants the means, where the purpose of it is deep and earnest in the soul.

The purpose of self-culture, this is the life and strength of all the methods we use for our own elevation. I reiterate this principle on account of its great importance; and I would add a remark to prevent its misapprehension. When I speak of the purpose of self-culture, I mean that it should be sincere. In other words, we must make self-culture really and truly our end, or choose it for its own sake, and not merely as a means or instrument of something else. And here I touch a common and very pernicious error. Not a few persons desire to improve themselves only to get property and to rise in the world; but such do not properly choose improvement, but something outward and foreign to themselves; and so low an impulse can produce only a stunted, partial, uncertain growth. A man, as I have said, is to cultivate himself because he is a man. He is to start with the conviction that there is something greater within him than in the whole material creation, than in all the worlds which press on the eye and ear; and that inward improvements have a worth and dignity in themselves quite distinct from the power they give over outward things. Undoubtedly a man is to labor to better his condition, but first to better himself. If he knows no higher use of his mind than to invent and drudge for his body, his case is desperate as far as culture is concerned.

In these remarks, I do not mean to recommend to the laborer indifference to his outward lot. I hold it important that every man in every class should possess the means of comfort, of health, of neatness in food and apparel, and of occasional retirement and leisure. These are good in themselves, to be sought for their own sakes; and, still more, they are important means of the self-culture for which I am pleading. A clean, comfortable dwelling, with wholesome meals, is no small aid to intellectual and moral progress. A man living in a damp cellar or a garret open to rain and snow, breathing the foul air

of a filthy room, and striving without success to appease hunger on scanty or unsavory food, is in danger of abandoning himself to a desperate, selfish recklessness. Improve, then, your lot. Multiply comforts, and, still more, get wealth if you can by honorable means, and if it do not cost too much. A true cultivation of the mind is fitted to forward you in your worldly concerns, and you ought to use it for this end. Only, beware lest this end master you; lest your motives sink as your condition improves; lest you fall victims to the miserable passion of vying with those around you in show, luxury, and expense. Cherish a true respect for yourselves. Feel that your nature is worth more than everything which is foreign to you. He who has not caught a glimpse of his own rational and spiritual being, of something within himself superior to the world and allied to the Divinity, wants the true spring of that purpose of self-culture on which I have insisted as the first of all the means of improvement.

I proceed to another important means of self-culture; and this is the control of the animal appetites. To raise the moral and intellectual nature, we must put down the animal. Sensuality is the abyss in which very many souls are plunged and lost. Among the most prosperous classes what a vast amount of intellectual life is drowned in luxurious excesses! It is one great curse of wealth, that it is used to pamper the senses; and among the poorer classes, though luxury is wanting, yet a gross feeding often prevails, under which the spirit is whelmed. It is a sad sight to walk through our streets and to see how many countenances bear marks of a lethargy and a brutal coarseness, induced by unrestrained indulgence. Whoever would cultivate the soul must restrain the appetites. I am not an advocate for the doctrine that animal food was not meant for man; but that this is used among us to excess, that as a people we should gain much in cheerfulness, activity, and buoyancy of mind, by less gross and stimulating food, I am strongly inclined to believe. Above all, let me urge on those who would bring out and elevate their higher nature to abstain from the use of spirituous liquors. This bad habit is distinguished from all others by the ravages it makes on the reason, the intellect; and this effect is produced to a mournful extent, even when drunkenness is escaped. Not a few men, called temperate, and who have thought

themselves such, have learned, on abstaining from the use of ardent spirits, that for years their minds had been clouded, impaired by moderate drinking, without their suspecting the injury. Multitudes in this city are bereft of half their intellectual energy by a degree of indulgence which passes for innocent. Of all the foes of the working class, this is the deadliest. Nothing has done more to keep down this class, to destroy their self-respect, to rob them of their just influence in the community, to render profitless the means of improvement within their reach, than the use of ardent spirits as a drink. They are called on to withstand this practice, as they regard their honor, and would take their just place in society. They are under solemn obligations to give their sanction to every effort for its suppression. They ought to regard as their worst enemies (though unintentionally such), as the enemies of their rights, dignity, and influence, the men who desire to flood city and country with distilled poison. I lately visited a flourishing village, and on expressing to one of the respected inhabitants the pleasure I felt in witnessing so many signs of progress, he replied that one of the causes of the prosperity I witnessed was the disuse of ardent spirits by the people. And this reformation we may be assured wrought something higher than outward prosperity. In almost every family so improved, we cannot doubt that the capacities of the parent for intellectual and moral improvement were enlarged, and the means of education made more effectual to the child. I call on workingmen to take hold of the cause of temperance as peculiarly their cause. These remarks are the more needed in consequence of the efforts made far and wide to annul at the present moment a recent law for the suppression of the sale of ardent spirits in such quantities as favor intemperance. I know that there are intelligent and good men who believe that, in enacting this law, government transcended its limits, left its true path, and established a precedent for legislative interference with all our pursuits and pleasures. No one here looks more jealously on government than myself. But I maintain that this is a case which stands by itself, which can be confounded with no other, and on which government, from its very nature and end, is peculiarly bound to act. Let it never be forgotten that the great end of government, its highest function, is, not to make roads, grant charters, originate

. improvements, but to prevent or repress crimes against individual rights and social order. For this end it ordains a penal code, erects prisons, and inflicts fearful punishments. Now, if it be true that a vast proportion of the crimes which government is instituted to prevent and repress have their origin in the use of ardent spirits; if our poor-houses, work-houses, jails, and penitentiaries, are tenanted in a great degree by those whose first and chief impulse to crime came from the distillery and dram-shop; if murder and theft, the most fearful outrages on property and life, are most frequently the issues and consummation of intemperance, is not government bound to restrain by legislation the vending of the stimulus to these terrible social wrongs? Is government never to act as a parent, never to remove the causes or occasions of wrong-doing? Has it but one instrument for repressing crime; namely, public, infamous punishment—an evil only inferior to crime? Is government a usurper, does it wander beyond its sphere, by imposing restraints on an article which does no imaginable good, which can plead no benefit conferred on body or mind, which unfits the citizen for the discharge of his duty to his country, and which, above all, stirs up men to the perpetration of most of the crimes from which it is the highest and most solemn office of government to protect society?

I come now to another important measure of self-culture, and this is, intercourse with superior minds. I have insisted on our own activity as essential to our progress; but we were not made to live or advance alone. Society is as needful to us as air or food. A child doomed to utter loneliness, growing up without sight or sound of human beings, would not put forth equal power with many brutes; and a man, never brought into contact with minds superior to his own, will probably run one and the same dull round of thought and action to the end of life.

It is chiefly through books that we enjoy intercourse with superior minds, and these invaluable means of communication are in the reach of all. In the best books great men talk to us, give us their most precious thoughts, and pour their souls into ours. God be thanked for books. They are the voices of the distant and the dead, and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages. Books are the true levellers. They give to all who will faithfully use them the society, the spiritual presence, of



the best and greatest of our race. No matter how poor I am. No matter though the prosperous of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling. If the sacred writers will enter and take up their abode under my roof; if Milton will cross my threshold to sing to me of paradise, and Shakespeare to open to me the worlds of imagination and the workings of the human heart, and Franklin to enrich me with his practical wisdom, I shall not pine for want of intellectual companionship, and I may become a cultivated man though excluded from what is called the best society in the place where I live.

To make this means of culture effectual a man must select good books, such as have been written by right-minded and strong-minded men, real thinkers, who, instead of diluting by repetition what others say, have something to say for themselves, and write to give relief to full, earnest souls; and these works must not be skimmed over for amusement, but read with fixed attention and a reverential love of truth. In selecting books we may be aided much by those who have studied more than ourselves. But, after all, it is best to be determined in this particular a good deal by our own tastes. The best books for a man are not always those which the wise recommend, but oftener those which meet the peculiar wants, the natural thirst of his mind, and therefore awaken interest and rivet thought. And here it may be well to observe, not only in regard to books, but in other respects, that self-culture must vary with the individual. All means do not equally suit us all. A man must unfold himself freely, and should respect the peculiar gifts or biases by which nature has distinguished him from others. Self-culture does not demand the sacrifice of individuality. It does not regularly apply an established machinery, for the sake of torturing every man into one rigid shape, called perfection. As the human countenance, with the same features in us all, is diversified without end in the race, and is never the same in any two individuals, so the human soul, with the same grand powers and laws, expands into an infinite variety of forms, and would be woefully stunted by modes of culture requiring all men to learn the same lesson or to bend to the same rules.

I know how hard it is to some men, especially to those who spend much time in manual labor, to fix attention on books. Let them strive to overcome the difficulty by choosing subjects

of deep interest, or by reading in company with those whom they love. Nothing can supply the place of books. They are cheering or soothing companions in solitude, illness, affliction. The wealth of both continents would not compensate for the good they impart. Let every man, if possible, gather some good books under his roof, and obtain access for himself and family to some social library. Almost any luxury should be sacrificed to this.

One of the very interesting features of our times is the multiplication of books, and their distribution through all conditions of society. At a small expense a man can now possess himself of the most precious treasures of English literature. Books, once confined to a few by their costliness, are now accessible to the multitude; and in this way a change of habits is going on in society, highly favorable to the culture of the people. Instead of depending on casual rumor and loose conversation for most of their knowledge and objects of thought; instead of forming their judgments in crowds, and receiving their chief excitement from the voice of neighbors, men are now learning to study and reflect alone, to follow out subjects continuously, to determine for themselves what shall engage their minds, and to call to their aid the knowledge, original views, and reasonings of men of all countries and ages; and the results must be, a deliberateness and independence of judgment, and a thoroughness and extent of information, unknown in former times. The diffusion of these silent teachers, books, through the whole community, is to work greater effects than artillery, machinery, and legislation. Its peaceful agency is to supersede stormy revolutions. The culture which it is to spread, whilst an unspeakable good to the individual, is also to become the stability of nations.

Another important means of self-culture is to free ourselves from the power of human opinion and example, except as far as these is sanctioned by our own deliberate judgment. We are all prone to keep the level of those we live with, to repeat their words, and dress our minds as well as bodies after their fashion; and hence the spiritless tameness of our characters and lives. Our greatest danger is not from the grossly wicked around us, but from the worldly, unreflecting multitude, who are borne along as a stream by foreign impulse, and bear us along with

them. Even the influence of superior minds may harm us, by bowing us to servile acquiescence and damping our spiritual activity. The great use of intercourse with other minds is to stir up our own, to whet our appetite for truth, to carry our thoughts beyond their old tracks. We need connections with great thinkers to make us thinkers too. One of the chief arts of self-culture is to unite the child-like teachableness, which gratefully welcomes light from every human being who can give it, with manly resistance of opinions however current, of influences however generally revered, which do not approve themselves to our deliberate judgment. You ought, indeed, patiently and conscientiously to strengthen your reason by other men's intelligence, but you must not prostrate it before them. Especially if there springs up within you any view of God's word or universe, any sentiment or aspiration which seems to you of a higher order than what you meet abroad, give reverent heed to it; inquire into it earnestly, solemnly. Do not trust it blindly, for it may be an illusion; but it may be the Divinity moving within you, a new revelation, not supernatural, but still most precious, of truth or duty; and if, after inquiry, it so appear, then let no clamor, or scorn, or desertion turn you from it. Be true to your own highest convictions. Intimations from our own souls of something more perfect than others teach, if faithfully followed, give us a consciousness of spiritual force and progress never experienced by the vulgar of high life or low life, who march, as they are drilled, to the step of their times.

Some, I know, will wonder that I should think the mass of the people capable of such intimations and glimpses of truth as I have just supposed. These are commonly thought to be the prerogative of men of genius, who seem to be born to give law to the minds of the multitude. Undoubtedly nature has her nobility, and sends forth a few to be eminently "lights of the world." But it is also true that a portion of the same divine fire is given to all; for the many could not receive with a loving reverence the quickening influences of the few, were there not essentially the same spiritual life in both. The minds of the multitude are not masses of passive matter, created to receive impressions unresistingly from abroad. They are not wholly shaped by foreign instruction; but have a native force, a spring

of thought in themselves. Even the child's mind outruns its lessons, and overflows in questionings which bring the wisest to a stand. Even the child starts the great problems, which philosophy has labored to solve for ages. But on this subject I cannot now enlarge. Let me only say that the power of original thought is particularly manifested in those who thirst for progress, who are bent on unfolding their whole nature. A man who wakes up to the consciousness of having been created for progress and perfection looks with new eyes on himself and on the world in which he lives. This great truth stirs the soul from its depths, breaks up old associations of ideas, and establishes new ones, just as a mighty agent of chemistry, brought into contact with natural substances, dissolves the old affinities which had bound their particles together, and arranges them anew. This truth particularly aids us to penetrate the mysteries of human life. By revealing to us the end of our being, it helps us to comprehend more and more the wonderful, the infinite system, to which we belong. A man in the common walks of life, who has faith in perfection, in the unfolding of the human spirit, as the great purpose of God, possesses more the secret of the universe, perceives more the harmonies or mutual adaptations of the world without and the world within him, is a wiser interpreter of Providence, and reads nobler lessons of duty in the events which pass before him, than the profoundest philosopher who wants this grand central truth. Thus illuminations, inward suggestions, are not confined to a favored few, but visit all who devote themselves to a generous self-culture.

Another means of self-culture may be found by every man in his condition or occupation, be it what it may. Had I time, I might go through all conditions of life, from the most conspicuous to the most obscure, and might show how each furnishes continual aids to improvement. But I will take one example, and that is, of a man living by manual labor. This may be made the means of self-culture. For instance, in almost all labor, a man exchanges his strength for an equivalent in the form of wages, purchase-money, or some other product. In other words, labor is a system of contracts, bargains, imposing mutual obligations. Now the man who, in working, no matter in what way, strives perpetually to fulfil his obligations thor-

oughly, to do his whole work faithfully, to be honest, not because honesty is the best policy, but for the sake of justice, and that he may render to every man his due, such a laborer is continually building up in himself one of the greatest principles of morality and religion. Every blow on the anvil, on the earth, or whatever material he works upon, contributes something to the perfection of his nature.

Nor is this all. Labor is a school of benevolence as well as justice. A man, to support himself, must serve others. He must do or produce something for their comfort or gratification. This is one of the beautiful ordinations of Providence, that, to get a living, a man must be useful. Now this usefulness ought to be an end in his labor as truly as to earn his living. He ought to think of the benefit of those he works for, as well as of his own; and in so doing, in desiring amidst his sweat and toil to serve others as well as himself, he is exercising and growing in benevolence, as truly as if he were distributing bounty with a large hand to the poor. Such a motive hallows and dignifies the commonest pursuit. It is strange that laboring men do not think more of the vast usefulness of their toils, and take a benevolent pleasure in them on this account. This beautiful city, with its houses, furniture, markets, public walks, and numberless accommodations, has grown up under the hands of artisans and other laborers; and ought they not to take a disinterested joy in their work? One would think that a carpenter or mason, on passing a house which he had reared, would say to himself, "This work of mine is giving comfort and enjoyment every day and hour to a family, and will continue to be a kindly shelter, a domestic gathering-place, an abode of affection, for a century or more after I sleep in the dust;" and ought not a generous satisfaction to spring up at the thought? It is by thus interweaving goodness with common labor that we give it strength, and make it a habit of the soul.

Again. Labor may be so performed as to be a high impulse to the mind. Be a man's vocation what it may, his rule should be to do its duties perfectly, to do the best he can, and thus to make perpetual progress in his art. In other words, perfection should be proposed; and this I urge not only for its usefulness to society, nor for the sincere pleasure which a man takes in seeing a work well done. This is an important means of self-

culture. In this way the idea of perfection takes root in the mind, and spreads far beyond the man's trade. He gets a tendency towards completeness in whatever he undertakes. Slack, slovenly performance in any department of life is more apt to offend him. His standard of action rises, and everything is better done for his thoroughness in his common vocation.

There is one circumstance attending all conditions of life which may and ought to be turned to the use of self-culture. Every condition, be it what it may, has hardships, hazards, pains. We try to escape them; we pine for a sheltered lot, for a smooth path, for cheering friends, and unbroken success. But Providence ordains storms, disasters, hostilities, sufferings; and the great question, whether we shall live to any purpose or not, whether we shall grow strong in mind and heart, or be weak and pitiable, depends on nothing so much as on our use of these adverse circumstances. Outward evils are designed to school our passions, and to rouse our faculties and virtues into intenser action. Sometimes they seem to create new powers. Difficulty is the element, and resistance the true work of a man. Self-culture never goes on so fast as when embarrassed circumstances, the opposition of men or the elements, unexpected changes of the times, or other forms of suffering, instead of disheartening, throw us on our inward resources, turn us for strength to God, clear up to us the great purpose of life, and inspire calm resolution. No greatness or goodness is worth much unless tried in these fires. Hardships are not on this account to be sought for. They come fast enough of themselves, and we are in more danger of sinking under than of needing them. But when God sends them, they are noble means of self-culture, and as such let us meet and bear them cheerfully. Thus all parts of our condition may be pressed into the service of self-improvement.

I have time to consider but one more means of self-culture. We find it in our free government, in our political relations and duties. It is a great benefit of free institutions, that they do much to awaken and keep in action a nation's mind. We are told that the education of the multitude is necessary to the support of a republic; but it is equally true that a republic is a powerful means of educating the multitude. It is the people's

university. In a free state, solemn responsibilities are imposed on every citizen ; great subjects are to be discussed ; great interests to be decided. The individual is called to determine measures affecting the well-being of millions and the destinies of posterity. He must consider not only the internal relations of his native land, but its connection with foreign states, and judge of a policy which touches the whole civilized world. He is called, by his participation in the national sovereignty, to cherish public spirit, a regard to the general weal. A man who purposes to discharge faithfully these obligations is carrying on a generous self-culture. The great public questions which divide opinion around him and provoke earnest discussion, of necessity invigorate his intellect, and accustom him to look beyond himself. He grows up to a robustness, force, enlargement of mind, unknown under despotic rule.

It may be said that I am describing what free institutions ought to do for the character of the individual, not their actual effects ; and the objection, I must own, is too true. Our institutions do not cultivate us, as they might and should ; and the chief cause of the failure is plain. It is the strength of party spirit ; and so blighting is its influence, so fatal to self-culture, that I feel myself bound to warn every man against it who has any desire of improvement. I do not tell you it will destroy your country. It wages a worse war against yourselves. Truth, justice, candor, fair dealing, sound judgment, self-control, and kind affections, are its natural and perpetual prey.

I do not say that you must take no side in politics. The parties which prevail around you differ in character, principles, and spirit, though far less than the exaggeration of passion affirms ; and, as far as conscience allows, a man should support that which he thinks best. In one respect, however, all parties agree. They all foster that pestilent spirit which I now condemn. In all of them party spirit rages. Associate men together for a common cause, be it good or bad, and array against them a body resolutely pledged to an opposite interest, and a new passion, quite distinct from the original sentiment which brought them together, a fierce, fiery zeal, consisting chiefly of aversion to those who differ from them, is roused within them into fearful activity. Human nature seems incapable of a stronger, more unrelenting passion. It is hard enough for an individual, when

contending all alone for an interest or an opinion, to keep down his pride, wilfulness, love of victory, anger, and other personal feelings. But let him join a multitude in the same warfare, and, without singular self-control, he receives into his single breast the vehemence, obstinacy, and vindictiveness of all. The triumph of his party becomes immeasurably dearer to him than the principle, true or false, which was the original ground of division. The conflict becomes a struggle, not for principle but for power, for victory; and the desperateness, the wickedness of such struggles, is the great burden of history. In truth, it matters little what men divide about, whether it be a foot of land or precedence in a procession. Let them but begin to fight for it, and self-will, ill-will, the rage for victory, the dread of mortification and defeat, make the trifle as weighty as a matter of life and death. The Greek or Eastern empire was shaken to its foundation by parties which differed only about the merits of charioteers at the amphitheatre. Party spirit is singularly hostile to moral independence. A man, in proportion as he drinks into it, sees, hears, judges by the senses and understandings of his party. He surrenders the freedom of a man, the right of using and speaking his own mind, and echoes the applauses or maledictions with which the leaders or passionate partisans see fit that the country should ring. On all points, parties are to be distrusted; but on no one so much as on the character of opponents. These, if you may trust what you hear, are always men without principle and truth, devoured by selfishness, and thirsting for their own elevation, though on their country's ruin. When I was young, I was accustomed to hear pronounced with abhorrence, almost with execration, the names of men who are now hailed by their former foes as the champions of grand principles, and as worthy of the highest public trusts. This lesson of early experience, which later years have corroborated, will never be forgotten.

Of our present political divisions I have of course nothing to say. But, among the current topics of party, there are certain accusations and recriminations, grounded on differences of social condition, which seem to me so unfriendly to the improvement of individuals and the community that I ask the privilege of giving them a moment's notice. On one side we are told that the rich are disposed to trample on the poor; and, on the



other, that the poor look with evil eye and hostile purpose on the possessions of the rich. These outcries seem to me alike devoid of truth and alike demoralizing. As for the rich, who constitute but a handful of our population, who possess not one peculiar privilege, and, what is more, who possess comparatively little of the property of the country, it is wonderful that they should be objects of alarm. The vast and ever-growing property of this country, where is it? Locked up in a few hands? hoarded in a few strong boxes? It is diffused like the atmosphere, and almost as variable, changing hands with the seasons, shifting from rich to poor, not by the violence but by the industry and skill of the latter class. The wealth of the rich is as a drop in the ocean; and it is a well-known fact, that those men among us who are noted for their opulence exert hardly any political power on the community. That the rich do their whole duty; that they adopt, as they should, the great object of the social state, which is the elevation of the people in intelligence, character, and condition, cannot be pretended; but that they feel for the physical sufferings of their brethren, that they stretch out liberal hands for the succor of the poor, and for the support of useful public institutions, cannot be denied. Among them are admirable specimens of humanity. There is no warrant for holding them up to suspicion as the people's foes.

Nor do I regard as less calumnious the outcry against the working classes, as if they were aiming at the subversion of property. When we think of the general condition and character of this part of our population; when we recollect that they were born and have lived amidst schools and churches, that they have been brought up to profitable industry, that they enjoy many of the accommodations of life, that most of them hold a measure of property and are hoping for more, that they possess unprecedented means of bettering their lot, that they are bound to comfortable homes by strong domestic affections, that they are able to give their children an education which places within their reach the prizes of the social state, that they are trained to the habits and familiarized to the advantages of a high civilization; when we recollect these things, can we imagine that they are so insanely blind to their interests, so deaf to the claims of justice and religion, so profligately thoughtless of the peace and safety of their families, as to be prepared to

make a wreck of social order, for the sake of dividing among themselves the spoils of the rich, which would not support the community for a month? Undoubtedly there is insecurity in all stages of society, and so there must be until communities shall be regenerated by a higher culture, reaching and quickening all classes of the people; but there is not, I believe, a spot on earth where property is safer than here, because nowhere else is it so equally and righteously diffused. In aristocracies, where wealth exists in enormous masses, which have been entailed for ages by a partial legislation on a favored few, and where the multitude, after the sleep of ages, are waking up to intelligence, to self-respect, and to a knowledge of their rights, property is exposed to shocks which are not to be dreaded among ourselves. Here, indeed, as elsewhere, among the less prosperous members of the community, there are disappointed, desperate men, ripe for tumult and civil strife; but it is also true that the most striking and honorable distinction of this country is to be found in the intelligence, character, and condition of the great working class. To me it seems that the great danger to property here is not from the laborer, but from those who are making haste to be rich. For example, in this commonwealth no act has been thought by the alarmists or the conservatives so subversive of the rights of property as a recent law authorizing a company to construct a free bridge in the immediate neighborhood of another which had been chartered by a former legislature, and which had been erected in the expectation of an exclusive right. And with whom did this alleged assault on property originate? With levellers? with needy laborers? with men bent on the prostration of the rich? No; but with men of business, who are anxious to push a more lucrative trade. Again, what occurrence among us has been so suited to destroy confidence, and to stir up the people against the moneyed class, as the late criminal mismanagement of some of our banking institutions? And whence came this? from the rich, or the poor? From the agrarian, or the man of business? Who, let me ask, carry on the work of spoliation most extensively in society? Is not more property wrested from its owners by rash or dishonest failures than by professed highwaymen and thieves? Have not a few unprincipled speculators sometimes inflicted wider wrongs and sufferings than all the

tenants of a State prison? Thus property is in more danger from those who are aspiring after wealth than from those who live by the sweat of their brow. I do not believe, however, that the institution is in serious danger from either. All the advances of society in industry, useful arts, commerce, knowledge, jurisprudence, fraternal union, and practical Christianity, are so many hedges around honestly acquired wealth, so many barriers against revolutionary violence and rapacity. Let us not torture ourselves with idle alarms, and, still more, let us not inflame ourselves against one another by mutual calumnies. Let not class array itself against class, where all have a common interest. One way of provoking men to crime is to suspect them of criminal designs. We do not secure our property against the poor by accusing them of schemes of universal robbery; nor render the rich better friends of the community by fixing on them the brand of hostility to the people. Of all parties, those founded on different social conditions are the most pernicious; and in no country on earth are they so groundless as in our own.

Among the best people, especially among the more religious, there are some who, through disgust with the violence and frauds of parties, withdraw themselves from all political action. Such, I conceive, do wrong. God has placed them in the relations, and imposed on them the duties, of citizens; and they are no more authorized to shrink from these duties than from those of sons, husbands, or fathers. They owe a great debt to their country, and must discharge it by giving support to what they deem the best men and the best measures. Nor let them say that they can do nothing. Every good man, if faithful to his convictions, benefits his country. All parties are kept in check by the spirit of the better portion of people whom they contain. Leaders are always compelled to ask what their party will bear, and to modify their measures, so as not to shock the men of principle within their ranks. A good man, not tamely subservient to the body with which he acts, but judging it impartially, criticising it freely, bearing testimony against its evils, and withholding his support from wrong, does good to those around him, and is cultivating generously his own mind.

I respectfully counsel those whom I address to take part in the politics of their country. These are the true discipline of a

people, and do much for their education. I counsel you to labor for a clear understanding of the subjects which agitate the community, to make them your study, instead of wasting your leisure in vague, passionate talk about them. The time thrown away by the mass of the people on the rumors of the day might, if better spent, give them a good acquaintance with the constitution, laws, history, and interests of their country, and thus establish them in those great principles by which particular measures are to be determined. In proportion as the people thus improve themselves, they will cease to be the tools of designing politicians. Their intelligence, not their passions and jealousies, will be addressed by those who seek their votes. They will exert, not a nominal, but a real influence on the government and the destinies of the country, and at the same time will forward their own growth in truth and virtue.

I ought not to quit this subject of politics, considered as a means of self-culture, without speaking of newspapers; because these form the chief reading of the bulk of the people. They are the literature of multitudes. Unhappily, their importance is not understood; their bearing on the intellectual and moral cultivation of the community little thought of. A newspaper ought to be conducted by one of our most gifted men, and its income should be such as to enable him to secure the contributions of men as gifted as himself. But we must take newspapers as they are; and a man anxious for self-culture may turn them to account, if he will select the best within his reach. He should exclude from his house such as are venomous or scurrilous, as he would a pestilence. He should be swayed in his choice, not merely by the ability with which a paper is conducted, but still more by its spirit, by its justice, fairness, and steady adherence to great principles. Especially, if he would know the truth, let him hear both sides. Let him read the defence as well as the attack. Let him not give his ear to one party exclusively. We condemn ourselves when we listen to reproaches thrown on an individual and turn away from his exculpation; and is it just to read continual, unsparing invective against large masses of men, and refuse them the opportunity of justifying themselves?

A new class of daily papers has sprung up in our country, sometimes called cent papers, and designed for circulation

among those who cannot afford costlier publications. My interest in the working class induced me some time ago to take one of these, and I was gratified to find it not wanting in useful matter. Two things, however, gave me pain. The advertising columns were devoted very much to patent medicines; and when I considered that a laboring man's whole fortune is his health, I could not but lament that so much was done to seduce him to the use of articles more fitted, I fear, to undermine than to restore his constitution. I was also shocked by accounts of trials in the police court. These were written in a style adapted to the most uncultivated minds, and intended to turn into matters of sport the most painful and humiliating events of life. Were the newspapers of the rich to attempt to extract amusement from the vices and miseries of the poor a cry would be raised against them, and very justly. But is it not something worse that the poorer classes themselves should seek occasions of laughter and merriment in the degradation, the crimes, the woes, the punishments of their brethren, of those who are doomed to bear like themselves the heaviest burdens of life, and who have sunk under the temptations of poverty? Better go to the hospital, and laugh over the wounds and writhings of the sick or the ravings of the insane, than amuse ourselves with brutal excesses and infernal passions, which not only expose the criminal to the crushing penalties of human laws, but incur the displeasure of Heaven, and, if not repented of, will be followed by the fearful retribution of the life to come.

One important topic remains. That great means of self-improvement, Christianity, is yet untouched, and its greatness forbids me now to approach it. I will only say, that if you study Christianity in its original records, and not in human creeds; if you consider its clear revelations of God, its life-giving promises of pardon and spiritual strength, its correspondence to man's reason, conscience, and best affections, and its adaptation to his wants, sorrows, anxieties, and fears; if you consider the strength of its proofs, the purity of its precepts, the divine greatness of the character of its author, and the immortality which it opens before us, you will feel yourselves bound to welcome it joyfully, gratefully, as affording aids and incitements to self-culture which would vainly be sought in all other means.

I have thus presented a few of the means of self-culture. The topics now discussed will, I hope, suggest others to those who have honored me with their attention, and create an interest which will extend beyond the present hour. I owe it, however, to truth to make one remark. I wish to raise no unreasonable hopes. I must say, then, that the means now recommended to you, though they will richly reward every man of every age who will faithfully use them, will yet not produce their full and happiest effect, except in cases where early education has prepared the mind for future improvement. They whose childhood has been neglected, though they may make progress in future life, can hardly repair the loss of their first years; and I say this, that we may all be excited to save our children from this loss, that we may prepare them, to the extent of our power, for an effectual use of all the means of self-culture which adult age may bring with it. With these views, I ask you to look with favor on the recent exertions of our legislature and of private citizens in behalf of our public schools, the chief hope of our country. The legislature has of late appointed a board of education, with a secretary, who is to devote his whole time to the improvement of public schools. An individual more fitted to this responsible office than the gentleman who now fills it<sup>2</sup> cannot, I believe, be found in our community; and if his labors shall be crowned with success, he will earn a title to the gratitude of the good people of this State unsurpassed by that of any other living citizen. Let me also recall to your minds a munificent individual,<sup>3</sup> who, by a generous donation, has encouraged the legislature to resolve on the establishment of one or more institutions called normal schools, the object of which is to prepare accomplished teachers of youth—a work on which the progress of education depends more than on any other measure. The efficient friends of education are the true benefactors of their country, and their names deserve to be handed down to that posterity for whose highest wants they are generously providing.

There is another mode of advancing education in our whole country, to which I ask your particular attention. You are aware of the vast extent and value of the public lands of the Union. By annual sales of these large amounts of money are

<sup>2</sup> Horace Mann.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Dwight.

brought into the national treasury, which are applied to the current expenses of the government. For this application there is no need. In truth, the country has received detriment from the excess of its revenues. Now, I ask, why shall not the public lands be consecrated (in whole or in part, as the case may require) to the education of the people? This measure would secure at once what the country most needs; that is, able, accomplished, quickening teachers of the whole rising generation. The present poor remuneration of instructors is a dark omen, and the only real obstacle which the cause of education has to contend with. We need for our schools gifted men and women, worthy, by their intelligence and their moral power, to be intrusted with a nation's youth; and, to gain these, we must pay them liberally, as well as afford other proofs of the consideration in which we hold them. In the present state of the country, when so many paths of wealth and promotion are opened, superior men cannot be won to an office so responsible and laborious as that of teaching, without stronger inducements than are now offered, except in some of our large cities. The office of instructor ought to rank and be recompensed as one of the most honorable in society; and I see not how this is to be done, at least in our day, without appropriating to it the public domain. This is the people's property, and the only part of their property which is likely to be soon devoted to the support of a high order of institutions for public education. This object, interesting to all classes of society, has peculiar claims on those whose means of improvement are restricted by narrow circumstances. The mass of the people should devote themselves to it as one man, should toil for it with one soul. Mechanics, farmers, laborers! let the country echo with your united cry, "The Public Lands for Education." Send to the public councils men who will plead this cause with power. No party triumphs, no trades-unions, no associations, can so contribute to elevate you as the measure now proposed. Nothing but a higher education can raise you in influence and true dignity. The resources of the public domain, wisely applied for successive generations to the culture of society and of the individual, would create a new people, would awaken through this community intellectual and moral energies, such as the records of no country display, and as would command the re-

spect and emulation of the civilized world. In this grand object the working men of all parties, and in all divisions of the land, should join with an enthusiasm not to be withstood. They should separate it from all narrow and local strifes. They should not suffer it to be mixed up with the schemes of politicians. In it, they and their children have an infinite stake. May they be true to themselves, to posterity, to their country, to freedom, to the cause of mankind!

III. I am aware that the whole doctrine of this discourse will meet with opposition. There are not a few who will say to me: "What you tell us sounds well; but it is impracticable. Men who dream in their closets spin beautiful theories; but actual life scatters them, as the wind snaps the cobweb. You would have all men to be cultivated; but necessity wills that most men shall work; and which of the two is likely to prevail? A weak sentimentality may shrink from the truth; still it is true that most men were made, not for self-culture, but for toil."

I have put the objection into strong language, that we may all look it fairly in the face. For one I deny its validity. Reason, as well as sentiment, rises up against it. The presumption is certainly very strong, that the All-wise Father, who has given to every human being reason and conscience and affection, intended that these should be unfolded; and it is hard to believe that He who, by conferring this nature on all men, has made all his children, has destined the great majority to wear out a life of drudgery and unimproving toil, for the benefit of a few. God cannot have made spiritual beings to be dwarfed. In the body we see no organs created to shrivel by disuse; much less are the powers of the soul given to be locked up in perpetual lethargy.

Perhaps it will be replied that the purpose of the Creator is to be gathered, not from theory, but from facts; and that it is a plain fact, that the order and prosperity of society, which God must be supposed to intend, require from the multitude the action of their hands, and not the improvement of their minds. I reply that a social order demanding the sacrifice of the mind is very suspicious, that it cannot, indeed, be sanctioned by the Creator. Were I, on visiting a strange country, to see the vast majority of the people maimed, crippled, and bereft of sight, and were I told that social order required this mutilation,



I should say, Perish this order. Who would not think his understanding as well as best feelings insulted, by hearing this spoken of as the intention of God? Nor ought we to look with less aversion on a social system which can only be upheld by crippling and blinding the minds of the people.

But to come nearer to the point. Are labor and self-culture irreconcilable to each other? In the first place, we have seen that a man, in the midst of labor, may and ought to give himself to the most important improvements, that he may cultivate his sense of justice, his benevolence, and the desire of perfection. Toil is the school for these high principles; and we have here a strong presumption that, in other respects, it does not necessarily blight the soul. Next, we have seen that the most fruitful sources of truth and wisdom are not books, precious as they are, but experience and observation; and these belong to all conditions. It is another important consideration that almost all labor demands intellectual activity, and is best carried on by those who invigorate their minds; so that the two interests, toil and self-culture, are friends to each other. It is mind, after all, which does the work of the world, so that the more there is of mind, the more work will be accomplished. A man, in proportion as he is intelligent, makes a given force accomplish a greater task, makes skill take the place of muscles, and, with less labor, gives a better product. Make men intelligent, and they become inventive. They find shorter processes. Their knowledge of nature helps them to turn its laws to account, to understand the substances on which they work, and to seize on useful hints, which experience continually furnishes. It is among workmen that some of the most useful machines have been contrived. Spread education, and, as the history of this country shows, there will be no bounds to useful inventions. You think that a man without culture will do all the better what you call the drudgery of life. Go, then, to the Southern plantation. There the slave is brought up to be a mere drudge. He is robbed of the rights of a man, his whole spiritual nature is starved, that he may work, and do nothing but work; and in that slovenly agriculture, in that worn-out soil, in the rude state of the mechanic arts, you may find a comment on your doctrine, that, by degrading men, you make them more productive laborers.

But it is said, that any considerable education lifts men above their work, makes them look with disgust on their trades as mean and low, makes drudgery intolerable. I reply than a man becomes interested in labor just in proportion as the mind works with the hands. An enlightened farmer, who understands agricultural chemistry, the laws of vegetation, the structure of plants, the properties of manures, the influences of climate, who looks intelligently on his work, and brings his knowledge to bear on exigencies, is a much more cheerful, as well as more dignified laborer, than the peasant whose mind is akin to the clod on which he treads, and whose whole life is the same dull, unthinking, unimproving toil. But this is not all. Why is it, I ask, that we call manual labor low, that we associate with it the idea of meanness, and think that an intelligent people must scorn it? The great reason is, that, in most countries, so few intelligent people have been engaged in it. Once let cultivated men plough, and dig, and follow the commonest labors, and ploughing, digging, and trades will cease to be mean. It is the man who determines the dignity of the occupation, not the occupation which measures the dignity of the man. Physicians and surgeons perform operations less cleanly than fall to the lot of most mechanics. I have seen a distinguished chemist covered with dust like a laborer. Still these men were not degraded. Their intelligence gave dignity to their work, and so our laborers, once educated, will give dignity to their toils. Let me add, that I see little difference in point of dignity between the various vocations of men. When I see a clerk spending his days in adding figures, perhaps merely copying, or a teller of a bank counting money, or a merchant selling shoes and hides, I cannot see in these occupations greater respectableness than in making leather, shoes, or furniture. I do not see in them greater intellectual activity than in several trades. A man in the fields seems to have more chances of improvement in his work than a man behind the counter, or a man driving the quill. It is the sign of a narrow mind to imagine, as many seem to do, that there is a repugnance between the plain, coarse exterior of a laborer, and mental culture, especially the more refining culture. The laborer, under his dust and sweat, carries the grand elements of humanity, and he may put forth its highest powers. I doubt not there is as genuine enthusiasm in the

contemplation of nature, and in the perusal of works of genius, under a homespun garb as under finery. We have heard of a distinguished author who never wrote so well as when he was full dressed for company. But profound thought and poetical inspiration have most generally visited men when, from narrow circumstances or negligent habits, the rent coat and shaggy face have made them quite unfit for polished *salons*. A man may see truth, and may be thrilled with beauty, in one costume or dwelling as well as another; and he should respect himself the more for the hardships under which his intellectual force has been developed.

But it will be asked, how can the laboring classes find time for self-culture? I answer, as I have already intimated, that an earnest purpose finds time or makes time. It seizes on spare moments, and turns large fragments of leisure to golden account. A man who follows his calling with industry and spirit, and uses his earnings economically, will always have some portion of the day at command; and it is astonishing how fruitful of improvement a short season becomes, when eagerly seized and faithfully used. It has often been observed that they who have most time at their disposal profit by it least. A single hour in the day, steadily given to the study of an interesting subject, brings unexpected accumulations of knowledge. The improvements made by well-disposed pupils in many of our country schools, which are open but three months in the year, and in our Sunday schools, which are kept but one or two hours in the week, show what can be brought to pass by slender means. The affections, it is said, sometimes crowd years into moments, and the intellect has something of the same power. Volumes have not only been read, but written, in flying journeys. I have known a man of vigorous intellect, who had enjoyed few advantages of early education, and whose mind was almost engrossed by the details of an extensive business, but who composed a book of much original thought, in steamboats and on horseback, while visiting distant customers. The succession of the seasons gives to many of the working class opportunities for intellectual improvement. The winter brings leisure to the husbandman, and winter evenings to many laborers in the city. Above all, in Christian countries, the seventh day is released from toil. The seventh part of the year, no small portion of

existence, may be given by almost every one to intellectual and moral culture. Why is it that Sunday is not made a more effectual means of improvement? Undoubtedly the seventh day is to have a religious character; but religion connects itself with all the great subjects of human thought, and leads to and aids the study of all. God is in nature. God is in history. Instruction in the works of the Creator, so as to reveal His perfection in their harmony, beneficence, and grandeur; instruction in the histories of the church and the world, so as to show in all events His moral government, and to bring out the great moral lessons in which human life abounds; instruction in the lives of philanthropists, of saints, of men eminent for piety and virtue—all these branches of teaching enter into religion, and are appropriate to Sunday; and, through these, a vast amount of knowledge may be given to the people. Sunday ought not to remain the dull and fruitless season that it now is to multitudes. It may be clothed with a new interest and a new sanctity. It may give a new impulse to the nation's soul. I have thus shown that time may be found for improvement; and the fact is, that among our most improved people a considerable part consists of persons who pass the greatest portion of every day at the desk, in the counting-room, or in some other sphere, chained to tasks which have very little tendency to expand the mind. In the progress of society, with the increase of machinery, and with other aids which intelligence and philanthropy will multiply, we may expect that more and more time will be redeemed from manual labor for intellectual and social occupations.

But some will say: "Be it granted that the working classes may find some leisure; should they not be allowed to spend it in relaxation? Is it not cruel to summon them from toils of the hand to toils of the mind? They have earned pleasure by the day's toil, and ought to partake it." Yes, let them have pleasure. Far be it from me to dry up the fountains, to blight the spots of verdure, where they refresh themselves after life's labors. But I maintain that self-culture multiplies and increases their pleasures, that it creates new capacities of enjoyment, that it saves their leisure from being, what it too often is, dull and wearisome, that it saves them from rushing for excitement to indulgences destructive to body and soul. It is one of the great benefits of self-improvement, that it raises a

people above the gratifications of the brute, and gives them pleasures worthy of men. In consequence of the present intellectual culture of our country, imperfect as it is, a vast amount of enjoyment is communicated to men, women, and children, of all conditions, by books—an enjoyment unknown to ruder times. At this moment a number of gifted writers are employed in multiplying entertaining works. Walter Scott, a name conspicuous among the brightest of his day, poured out his inexhaustible mind in fictions, at once so sportive and thrilling that they have taken their place among the delights of all civilized nations. How many millions have been chained to his pages! How many melancholy spirits has been steeped in forgetfulness of their cares and sorrows! What multitudes, wearied by their day's work, have owed some bright evening hours and balmier sleep to his magical creations? And not only do fictions give pleasure. In proportion as the mind is cultivated, it takes delight in history and biography, in descriptions of nature, in travels, in poetry, and even graver works. Is the laborer then defrauded of pleasure by improvement? There is another class of gratifications to which self-culture introduces the mass of the people. I refer to lectures, discussions, meetings of associations for benevolent and literary purposes, and to other like methods of passing the evening, which every year is multiplying among us. A popular address from an enlightened man, who has the tact to reach the minds of the people, is a high gratification, as well as a source of knowledge. The profound silence in our public halls, where these lectures are delivered to crowds, shows that cultivation is no foe to enjoyment. I have a strong hope, that by the progress of intelligence, taste, and morals among all portions of society, a class of public amusements will grow up among us, bearing some resemblance to the theatre, but purified from the gross evils which degrade our present stage, and which, I trust, will seal its ruin. Dramatic performances and recitations are means of bringing the mass of the people into a quicker sympathy with a writer of genius, to a profounder comprehension of his grand, beautiful, touching conceptions, than can be effected by the reading of the closet. No commentary throws such a light on a great poem or any impassioned work of literature as the voice of a reader or speaker who brings to the task a deep feeling of

his author and rich and various powers of expression. A crowd, electrified by a sublime thought, or softened into a humanizing sorrow, under such a voice, partake a pleasure at once exquisite and refined; and I cannot but believe that this and other amusements, at which the delicacy of woman and the purity of the Christian can take no offence, are to grow up under a higher social culture. Let me only add, that, in proportion as culture spreads among a people, the cheapest and commonest of all pleasures, conversation, increases in delight. This, after all, is the great amusement of life, cheering us round our hearths, often cheering our work, stirring our hearts gently, acting on us like the balmy air or the bright light of heaven, so silently and continually, that we hardly think of its influence. This source of happiness is too often lost to men of all classes for want of knowledge, mental activity, and refinement of feeling; and do we defraud the laborer of his pleasure by recommending to him improvements which will place the daily, hourly blessings of conversation within his reach?

I have thus considered some of the common objections which start up when the culture of the mass of men is insisted on as the great end of society. For myself, these objections seem worthy little notice. The doctrine is too shocking to need refutation, that the great majority of human beings, endowed as they are with rational and immortal powers, are placed on earth simply to toil for their own animal subsistence, and to minister to the luxury and elevation of the few. It is monstrous, it approaches impiety, to suppose that God has placed insuperable barriers to the expansion of the free, illimitable soul. True, there are obstructions in the way of improvement. But in this country, the chief obstructions lie, not in our lot but in ourselves; not in outward hardships, but in our worldly and sensual propensities; and one proof of this is that a true self-culture is as little thought of on exchange as in the workshop, as little among the prosperous as among those of narrower conditions. The path to perfection is difficult to men in every lot; there is no royal road for rich or poor. But difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage. The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict. And how much has it already overcome! Under what burdens of oppression has it made its way for ages! What mountains of difficulty has it cleared! And with all this

experience, shall we say that the progress of the mass of men is to be despaired of; that the chains of bodily necessity are too strong and ponderous to be broken by the mind; that servile, unimproving drudgery is the unalterable condition of the multitude of the human race?

I conclude with recalling to you the happiest feature of our age, and that is, the progress of the mass of the people in intelligence, self-respect, and all the comforts of life. What a contrast does the present form with past times! Not many ages ago the nation was the property of one man, and all its interests were staked in perpetual games of war, for no end but to build up his family, or to bring new territories under his yoke. Society was divided into two classes, the high-born and the vulgar, separated from one another by a great gulf, as impassable as that between the saved and the lost. The people had no significance as individuals, but formed a mass, a machine, to be wielded at pleasure by their lords. In war, which was the great sport of the times, those brave knights, of whose prowess we hear, cased themselves and their horses in armor, so as to be almost invulnerable, whilst the common people on foot were left, without protection, to be hewn in pieces or trampled down by their betters. Who that compares the condition of Europe a few years ago with the present state of the world but must bless God for the change? The grand distinction of modern times is, the emerging of the people from brutal degradation, the gradual recognition of their rights, the gradual diffusion among them of the means of improvement and happiness, the creation of a new power in the state—the power of the people. And it is worthy remark, that this revolution is due in a great degree to religion, which, in the hands of the crafty and aspiring, had bowed the multitude to the dust, but which, in the fulness of time, began to fulfil its mission of freedom. It was religion which, by teaching men their near relation to God, awakened in them the consciousness of their importance as individuals. It was the struggle for religious rights which opened men's eyes to all their rights. It was resistance to religious usurpation which led men to withstand political oppression. It was religious discussion which roused the minds of all classes to free and vigorous thought. It was religion which armed the martyr and patriot in England

against arbitrary power, which braced the spirits of our fathers against the perils of the ocean and wilderness, and sent them to found here the freest and most equal state on earth.

Let us thank God for what has been gained. But let us not think everything gained. Let the people feel that they have only started in the race. How much remains to be done! What a vast amount of ignorance, intemperance, coarseness, sensuality, may still be found in our community! What a vast amount of mind is palsied and lost! When we think that every house might be cheered by intelligence, disinterestedness, and refinement, and then remember in how many houses the higher powers and affections of human nature are buried as in tombs, what a darkness gathers over society! And how few of us are moved by this moral desolation! How few understand that to raise the depressed, by a wise culture, to the dignity of men, is the highest end of the social state? Shame on us, that the worth of a fellow-creature is so little felt.

I would that I could speak with an awakening voice to the people of their wants, their privileges, their responsibilities. I would say to them, You cannot, without guilt and disgrace, stop where you are. The past and the present call on you to advance. Let what you have gained be an impulse to something higher. Your nature is too great to be crushed. You were not created what you are, merely to toil, eat, drink, and sleep, like the inferior animals. If you will, you can rise. No power in society, no hardship in your condition can depress you, keep you down, in knowledge, power, virtue, influence, but by your own consent. Do not be lulled to sleep by the flatteries which you hear, as if your participation in the national sovereignty made you equal to the noblest of your race. You have many and great deficiencies to be remedied; and the remedy lies, not in the ballot-box, not in the exercise of your political powers, but in the faithful education of yourselves and your children. These truths you have often heard and slept over. Awake! Resolve earnestly on self-culture. Make yourselves worthy of your free institutions, and strengthen and perpetuate them by your intelligence and your virtues.



## WASHINGTON IRVING

1783—1859

The youngest of eleven children, Washington Irving was born in New York City in 1783. He received only a common school education, but soon developed a marked taste for literature, which was encouraged and confirmed by the success of some contributions to a paper edited by one of his older brothers. Ill-health suggested a trip to Europe. He remained two years, and the mental impressions and stimulus he received were such that this journey may properly be regarded as his university education. On his return, in 1807, Irving helped to launch a periodical called "Salmagundi," in frank imitation of the "Spectator," which was well received. In 1809 he published his "History of New York, by Diedrich Knickerbocker," the most delightful and ably sustained burlesque in American literature. This work at once made Irving the most noted of American men of letters, but his happiness was clouded by the death of the young lady whom he was engaged to marry. Although he recovered from the blow, he never married. Owing to the business reverses of a mercantile house in which Irving was interested, he determined to rely henceforth upon his literary efforts for a livelihood. In 1819 he published the "Sketch Book." Murray, the English publisher having at first refused it, only undertook the venture on the personal solicitation of Walter Scott. It proved a great success, both in England and America. "Bracebridge Hall" followed in 1822. These books contain some of his finest work, and are widely studied as models of English composition. After publishing "Tales of a Traveller" in 1824, Irving went to Spain for the purpose of translating some newly discovered papers referring to Columbus. Becoming interested in the subject, he wrote his admirable "History of Columbus," and this was followed by the "Conquest of Granada," "The Alhambra," and several other charming books on early Spanish history.

In 1832 Irving returned to the United States, after an absence of seven years, being everywhere received with genuine enthusiasm. He now purchased the beautiful cottage "Sunnyside" at Tarrytown-on-the-Hudson to pass here quietly, as he thought, his remaining years. In 1842, however, he returned once more to Europe, this time in the honored capacity of American Minister to Spain, an office which he filled with distinction for four years. Having served his country well, he now devoted himself to preparing his "Life of Washington." This work of five volumes he only completed at the cost of great physical suffering. He died in his Sunnyside home at Tarrytown, in 1859, at the age of seventy-six.

Irving's position in American literature is deservedly high. Not only was he the first of the group of writers who are the founders of American literature, but he was the first American writer to arouse the interest of Englishmen, or, as Thackeray's graceful phrase puts it, "the first ambassador whom the New World of Letters sent to the Old." Irving was not a versatile writer. He wrote no poetry. His essay on "The Mutability of Literature" is one of the most important of his papers in the essay style. His is master of the short story, and several of his efforts in this field rank among the finest in all literature. Diedrich Knickerbocker, Sleepy Hollow, Ichabod Crane, and especially Rip Van Winkle, have become household names. His style is clear, musical, full of delicate touches, and pervaded with an indescribable charm that emanated from the genial character of the man.

# THE MUTABILITY OF LITERATURE

## A COLLOQUY IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

I know that all beneath the moon decays,  
And what by mortals in this world is brought,  
In time's great period shall return to nought.

I know that all the muse's heavenly lays,  
With toil of sprite which are so dearly bought,  
As idle sounds, of few or none are sought ;

That there is nothing lighter than mere praise.

—*Drummond of Hawthornden.*

THERE are certain half-dreaming moods of mind, in which we naturally steal away from noise and glare, and seek some quiet haunt, where we may indulge our reveries and build our air-castles undisturbed. In such a mood I was loitering about the old gray cloisters of Westminster Abbey, enjoying that luxury of wandering thought which one is apt to dignify with the name of reflection ; when suddenly an interruption of madcap boys from Westminster School, playing at football, broke in upon the monastic stillness of the place, making the vaulted passages and mouldering tombs echo with their merriment. I sought to take refuge from their noise by penetrating still deeper into the solitudes of the pile, and applied to one of the vergers for admission to the library. He conducted me through a portal rich with the crumbling sculpture of former ages, which opened upon a gloomy passage leading to the chapter-house and the chamber in which Doomsday Book is deposited. Just within the passage is a small door on the left. To this the verger applied a key ; it was double-locked, and opened with some difficulty, as if seldom used. We now ascended a dark, narrow staircase, and, passing through a second door, entered the library.

I found myself in a lofty antique hall, the roof supported by massive joints of old English oak. It was soberly lighted by a

row of Gothic windows at a considerable height from the floor, and which apparently opened upon the roofs of the cloisters. An ancient picture of some reverend dignitary of the Church in his robes hung over the fireplace. Around the hall and in a small gallery were the books, arranged in carved oaken cases. They consisted principally of old polemical writers, and were much more worn by time than use. In the centre of the library was a solitary table with two or three books on it, an inkstand without ink, and a few pens parched by long disuse. The place seemed fitted for quiet study and profound meditation. It was buried deep among the massive walls of the abbey, and shut up from the tumult of the world. I could only hear now and then the shouts of the schoolboys faintly swelling from the cloisters, and the sound of a bell tolling for prayers, echoing soberly along the roofs of the abbey. By degrees the shouts of merriment grew fainter and fainter, and at length died away; the bell ceased to toll, and a profound silence reigned through the dusky hall.

I had taken down a little thick quarto, curiously bound in parchment, with brass clasps, and seated myself at the table in a venerable elbow-chair. Instead of reading, however, I was beguiled by the solemn monastic air, and lifeless quiet of the place, into a train of musing. As I looked around upon the old volumes in their mouldering covers, thus ranged on the shelves, and apparently never disturbed in their repose, I could not but consider the library a kind of literary catacomb, where authors, like mummies, are piously entombed, and left to blacken and moulder in dusty oblivion.

How much, thought I, has each of these volumes, now thrust aside with such indifference, cost some aching head! how many weary days! how many sleepless nights! How have their authors buried themselves in the solitude of cells and cloisters; shut themselves up from the face of man, and the still more blessed face of nature; and devoted themselves to painful research and intense reflection! And all for what? to occupy an inch of dusty shelf—to have the title of their works read now and then in a future age, by some drowsy churchman or casual straggler like myself; and in another age to be lost, even to remembrance. Such is the amount of this boasted immortality. A mere temporary rumor, a local sound; like the

tone of that bell which has just tolled among these towers, filling the ear for a moment—lingering transiently in echo—and then passing away like a thing that was not!

While I sat half murmuring, half meditating these unprofitable speculations, with my head resting on my hand, I was thrumming with the other hand upon the quarto, until I accidentally loosened the clasps; when, to my utter astonishment, the little book gave two or three yawns, like one awaking from a deep sleep; then a husky “hem”; and at length began to talk. At first its voice was very hoarse and broken, being much troubled by a cobweb which some studious spider had woven across it; and having probably contracted a cold from long exposure to the chills and damps of the abbey. In a short time, however, it became more distinct, and I soon found it an exceedingly fluent, conversable little tome. Its language, to be sure, was rather quaint and obsolete, and its pronunciation, what in the present day would be deemed barbarous; but I shall endeavor, as far as I am able, to render it in modern parlance.

It began with railings about the neglect of the world—about merit being suffered to languish in obscurity, and other such commonplace topics of literary repining, and complained bitterly that it had not been opened for more than two centuries. That the dean only looked now and then into the library, sometimes took down a volume or two, trifled with them for a few moments, and then returned them to their shelves. “What a plague do they mean,” said the little quarto, which I began to perceive was somewhat choleric—“what a plague do they mean by keeping several thousand volumes of us shut up here, and watched by a set of old vergers, like so many beauties in a harem, merely to be looked at now and then by the dean? Books were written to give pleasure and to be enjoyed; and I would have a rule passed that the dean should pay each of us a visit at least once a year; or, if he is not equal to the task, let them once in a while turn loose the whole School of Westminster among us, that at any rate we may now and then have an airing.”

“Softly, my worthy friend,” replied I; “you are not aware how much better you are off than most books of your generation. By being stored away in this ancient library, you are like

the treasured remains of those saints and monarchs which lie enshrined in the adjoining chapels; while the remains of your contemporary mortals, left to the ordinary course of nature, have long since returned to dust."

"Sir," said the little tome, ruffling his leaves and looking big, "I was written for all the world, not for the bookworms of an abbey. I was intended to circulate from hand to hand, like other great contemporary works; but here have I been clasped up for more than two centuries, and might have silently fallen a prey to these worms that are playing the very vengeance with my intestines, if you had not by chance given me an opportunity of uttering a few last words before I go to pieces."

"My good friend," rejoined I, "had you been left to the circulation of which you speak, you would long ere this have been no more. To judge from your physiognomy, you are now well stricken in years: very few of your contemporaries can be at present in existence; and those few owe their longevity to being immured like yourself in old libraries; which, suffer me to add, instead of likening to harems, you might more properly and gratefully have compared to those infirmaries attached to religious establishments, for the benefit of the old and decrepit, and where, by quiet fostering and no employment, they often endure to an amazingly good-for-nothing old age. You talk of your contemporaries as if in circulation—where do we meet with their works? What do we hear of Robert Grosseteste, of Lincoln? No one could have toiled harder than he for immortality. He is said to have written nearly two hundred volumes. He built, as it were, a pyramid of books to perpetuate his name; but, alas! the pyramid has long since fallen, and only a few fragments are scattered in various libraries, where they are scarcely disturbed even by the antiquarian. What do we hear of Giraldus Cambrensis, the historian, antiquary, philosopher, theologian, and poet? He declined two bishoprics, that he might shut himself up and write for posterity: but posterity never inquires after his labors. What of Henry of Huntingdon, who, besides a learned history of England, wrote a treatise on the contempt of the world, which the world has revenged by forgetting him? What is quoted of Joseph of Exeter, styled the miracle of his age in classical composition? Of his three great heroic poems one is lost forever,

excepting a mere fragment ; the others are known only to a few of the curious in literature ; and as to his love-verses and epigrams, they have entirely disappeared. What is in current use of John Wallis, the Franciscan, who acquired the name of the ' Tree of Life ' ? Of William of Malmesbury ; of Simeon of Durham ; of Benedict of Peterborough ; of John Hanvill of St. Albans ; of ——"

" Prithee, friend," cried the quarto, in a testy tone, " how old do you think me ? You are talking of authors that lived before my time, and wrote either in Latin or French, so that they in a manner expatriated themselves, and deserved to be forgotten ; <sup>1</sup> but I, sir, was ushered into the world from the press of the renowned Wynkyn de Worde. I was written in my own native tongue, at a time when the language had become fixed ; and indeed I was considered a model of pure and elegant English."

(I should observe that these remarks were couched in such intolerably antiquated terms, that I have had infinite difficulty in rendering them into modern phraseology.)

" I cry your mercy," said I, " for mistaking your age ; but it matters little : almost all the writers of your time have likewise passed into forgetfulness ; and De Worde's publications are mere literary rarities among book-collectors. The purity and stability of language, too, on which you found your claims to perpetuity, have been the fallacious dependence of authors of every age, even back to the times of the worthy Robert of Gloucester, who wrote his history in rhymes of mongrel Saxon.<sup>2</sup> Even now many talk of Spenser's ' Well of pure English undefiled ' as if the language ever sprang from a well or fountain-head, and was not rather a mere confluence of various tongues, perpetually subject to changes and intermixtures. It is this which has made English literature so extremely mutable, and the reputation built upon it so fleeting. Unless thought can be committed to something more permanent and unchangeable

<sup>1</sup> " In Latin and French hath many soueraine wittes had great delyte to endyte, and have many noble thinges fulfild, but certes there ben some that speaken their poiseye in French, of which speche the Frenchmen have as good a fantasye as we have in hearyng of Frenchmen's Englishe."—*Chaucer*, " Testament of Love."

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed, in his " Chronicle," observes: " Afterwards, also, by diligent travell of Geffry Chaucer and of John

Gowre, in the time of Richard the Second, and after them of John Scogan and John Lydgate, monke of Berrie, our said toong was brought to an excellent passe, notwithstanding that it never came unto the type of perfection until the time of Queen Elizabeth, wherein John Jewell, Bishop of Sarum, John Foxe, and sundrie learned and excellent writers, have fully accomplished the orature of the same, to their great praise and immortal commendation."

than such a medium, even thought must share the fate of everything else, and fall into decay. This should serve as a check upon the vanity and exultation of the most popular writer. He finds the language in which he has embarked his fame gradually altering, and subject to the dilapidations of time and the caprice of fashion. He looks back and beholds the early authors of his country, once the favorites of their day, supplanted by modern writers. A few short ages have covered them with obscurity, and their merits can only be relished by the quaint taste of the bookworm. And such, he anticipates, will be the fate of his own work, which, however it may be admired in its day, and held up as a model of purity, will in the course of years grow antiquated and obsolete; until it shall become almost as unintelligible in its native land as an Egyptian obelisk, or one of those Runic inscriptions said to exist in the deserts of Tartary. I declare," added I, with some emotion, "when I contemplate a modern library, filled with new works, in all the bravery of rich gilding and binding, I feel disposed to sit down and weep; like the good Xerxes, when he surveyed his army, pranked out in all the splendor of military array, and reflected that in one hundred years not one of them would be in existence!"

"Ah," said the little quarto, with a heavy sigh, "I see how it is; these modern scribblers have superseded all the good old authors. I suppose nothing is read nowadays but Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia,' Sackville's stately plays, and 'Mirror for Magistrates,' or the fine-spun euphuisms of the 'unparalleled John Lyly.'"

"There you are again mistaken," said I; "the writers whom you suppose in vogue, because they happened to be so when you were last in circulation, have long since had their day. Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia,' the immortality of which was so fondly predicted by his admirers,<sup>3</sup> and which, in truth, is full of noble thoughts, delicate images, and graceful turns of language, is now scarcely ever mentioned. Sackville has strutted into obscurity; and even Lyly, though his writings were once the delight of a court, and apparently perpetuated by a proverb,

<sup>3</sup> "Live ever sweete booke; the simple image of his gentle witt, and the golden-pillar of his noble courage; and ever notify unto the world that thy writer was the secretary of eloquence, the breath of the muses, the honey-bee of the sweetest flowers of witt and arte,

the pith of morale and intellectual virtues, the arme of Bellona in the field, the tongue of Suada in the chamber, the sprite of Practise in esse, and the paragon of excellency in print."—*Harvey Pierce*, "Supererogation."

is now scarcely known even by name. A whole crowd of authors who wrote and wrangled at the time have likewise gone down, with all their writings and their controversies. Wave after wave of succeeding literature has rolled over them, until they are buried so deep that it is only now and then that some industrious diver after fragments of antiquity brings up a specimen for the gratification of the curious.

"For my part," I continued, "I consider this mutability of language a wise precaution of Providence for the benefit of the world at large, and of authors in particular. To reason from analogy, we daily behold the varied and beautiful tribes of vegetables springing up, flourishing, adorning the fields for a short time, and then fading into dust, to make way for their successors. Were not this the case, the fecundity of nature would be a grievance instead of a blessing. The earth would groan with rank and excessive vegetation, and its surface become a tangled wilderness. In like manner the works of genius and learning decline, and make way for subsequent productions. Language gradually varies, and with it fade away the writings of authors who have flourished their allotted time; otherwise, the creative powers of genius would overstock the world, and the mind would be completely bewildered in the endless mazes of literature. Formerly there were some restraints on this excessive multiplication. Works had to be transcribed by hand, which was a slow and laborious operation; they were written either on parchment, which was expensive, so that one work was often erased to make way for another; or on papyrus, which was fragile and extremely perishable. Authorship was a limited and unprofitable craft, pursued chiefly by monks in the leisure and solitude of their cloisters. The accumulation of manuscripts was slow and costly, and confined almost entirely to monasteries. To these circumstances it may, in some measure, be owing that we have not been inundated by the intellect of antiquity; that the fountains of thought have not been broken up, and modern genius drowned in the deluge. But the inventions of paper and the press have put an end to all these restraints. They have made everyone a writer, and enabled every mind to pour itself into print, and diffuse itself over the whole intellectual world. The consequences are alarming. The stream of literature has swollen into a torrent—augmented into



a river—expanded into a sea. A few centuries since five or six hundred manuscripts constituted a great library; but what would you say to libraries such as actually exist containing three or four hundred thousand volumes; legions of authors at the same time busy; and the press going on with activity, to double and quadruple the number. Unless some unforeseen mortality should break out among the progeny of the Muse, now that she has become so prolific, I tremble for posterity. I fear the mere fluctuation of language will not be sufficient. Criticism may do much. It increases with the increase of literature, and resembles one of those salutary checks on population spoken of by economists. All possible encouragement, therefore, should be given to the growth of critics, good or bad. But I fear all will be in vain; let criticism do what it may, writers will write, printers will print, and the world will inevitably be overstocked with good books. It will soon be the employment of a lifetime merely to learn their names. Many a man of passable information, at the present day, reads scarcely anything but reviews; and before long a man of erudition will be little better than a mere walking catalogue.”

“My very good sir,” said the little quarto, yawning most drearily in my face, “excuse my interrupting you, but I perceive you are rather given to prose. I would ask the fate of an author who was making some noise just as I left the world. His reputation, however, was considered quite temporary. The learned shook their heads at him, for he was a poor half-educated varlet, that knew little of Latin, and nothing of Greek, and had been obliged to run the country for deer-stealing. I think his name was Shakespeare. I presume he soon sunk into oblivion.”

“On the contrary,” said I, “it is owing to that very man that the literature of his period has experienced a duration beyond the ordinary term of English literature. There rise authors now and then, who seem proof against the mutability of language, because they have rooted themselves in the unchanging principles of human nature. They are like gigantic trees that we sometimes see on the banks of a stream; which, by their vast and deep roots, penetrating through the mere surface, and laying hold on the very foundations of the earth, preserve the soil around them from being swept away by the ever-flowing cur-

rent, and hold up many a neighboring plant, and, perhaps, worthless weed, to perpetuity. Such is the case with Shakespeare, whom we behold defying the encroachments of time, retaining in modern use the language and literature of his day, and giving duration to many an indifferent author, merely from having flourished in his vicinity. But even he, I grieve to say, is gradually assuming the tint of age, and his whole form is overrun by a profusion of commentators, who, like clambering vines and creepers, almost bury the noble plant that upholds them."

Here the little quarto began to heave his sides and chuckle, until at length he broke out in a plethoric fit of laughter that had wellnigh choked him, by reason of his excessive corpulency. "Mighty well!" cried he, as soon as he could recover breath; "mighty well! and so you would persuade me that the literature of an age is to be perpetuated by a vagabond deer-stealer! by a man without learning; by a poet, forsooth—a poet!" And here he wheezed forth another fit of laughter.

I confess that I felt somewhat nettled at this rudeness, which, however, I pardoned on account of his having flourished in a less polished age. I determined, nevertheless, not to give up my point.

"Yes," resumed I, positively, "a poet; for of all writers he has the best chance for immortality. Others may write from the head, but he writes from the heart, and the heart will always understand him. He is the faithful portrayer of nature, whose features are always the same, and always interesting. Prose-writers are voluminous and unwieldy; their pages are crowded with commonplaces, and their thoughts expanded into tediousness. But with the true poet everything is terse, touching, or brilliant. He gives the choicest thoughts in the choicest language. He illustrates them by everything that he sees most striking in nature and art. He enriches them by pictures of human life, such as it is passing before him. His writings, therefore, contain the spirit, the aroma, if I may use the phrase, of the age in which he lives. They are caskets which enclose within a small compass the wealth of the language—its family jewels, which are thus transmitted in a portable form to posterity. The setting may occasionally be antiquated, and require now and then to be renewed, as in the case of Chaucer; but the

brilliancy and intrinsic value of the gems continue unaltered. Cast a look back over the long reach of literary history. What vast valleys of dulness, filled with monkish legends and academical controversies! what bogs of theological speculations! what dreary wastes of metaphysics! Here and there only do we behold the heaven-illuminated bards, elevated like beacons on their widely separate heights, to transmit the pure light of poetical intelligence from age to age.”<sup>4</sup>

I was just about to launch forth into eulogiums upon the poets of the day, when the sudden opening of the door caused me to turn my head. It was the verger, who came to inform me that it was time to close the library. I sought to have a parting word with the quarto, but the worthy little tome was silent; the clasps were closed; and it looked perfectly unconscious of all that had passed. I have been to the library two or three times since, and have endeavored to draw it into further conversation, but in vain; and whether all this rambling colloquy actually took place, or whether it was another of those odd day-dreams to which I am subject, I have never to this moment been able to discover.

Thorow earth and waters deepe,  
The pen by skill doth passe;  
And featly nyps the worldes abuse,  
And shoes us in a glasse  
The vertu and the vice  
Of every wight alyve:  
The honey-comb that bee doth make  
Is not so sweet in hyve,

As are the golden leves  
That drop from poet's head!  
Which doth surmount our common  
talke  
As farre as dross doth lead.  
—"Churchyard."

**KEAN'S ACTING**

—

**BY**

**RICHARD HENRY DANA**

## RICHARD HENRY DANA

1787—1879

Richard Henry Dana, whose career must not be confounded with that of his son, Richard Henry Dana, Junior, the author of "Two Years before the Mast," was born at Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1787. He spent three years at Harvard, and was admitted to the bar in 1811. The law, however, had no attraction for him, and he soon devoted himself to literary pursuits. In 1814 he assisted in founding the "North American Review" in Boston, and in 1818 became one of its editors. During this period he contributed to that magazine a series of critical papers, notably one reviewing the entire field of English poetry down to Wordsworth, which gave proof of his fine culture and literary ability. He published two psychological novels, "Tom Thornton" and "Paul Felton," now seldom read, and a volume of poems likewise too metaphysical to gain permanent popularity.

His lectures on Shakespeare, which were well received and greatly admired, are perhaps his best and most successful literary effort. His admirable essay on "Kean's Acting" shows his profound appreciation of Shakespeare, and gives an excellent idea of his literary acumen and artistic temperament. Few dramatic criticisms contain such subtle analyses of an actor's interpretation, few are more suggestive and instructive. In 1850 Dana published an edition of his collected works in two volumes. He seldom wrote for publication after this, and was but rarely seen in public, passing his summers at Manchester-by-the-Sea, and his winters at Boston. He died in 1879, at the advanced age of ninety-two.

Taken as a whole, Dana's work is somewhat disappointing, inasmuch as it failed in the fulfilment of the promises of his youth. His influence extended only to the limited circle of the cultured and refined. His literary style is classic and severe, perfectly polished, faultless in form, but somewhat cold and colorless. In his literary criticisms he is at his best. Here his style is admirably adapted to the subject, and his acute discernment and keen analytical powers find their proper field.

## KEAN'S ACTING

I HAD scarcely thought of the theatre for several years, when Kean arrived in this country; and it was more from curiosity than from any other motive, that I went to see, for the first time, the great actor of the age. I was soon lost to the recollection of being in a theatre, or looking upon a grand display of the "mimic art." The simplicity, earnestness, and sincerity of his acting made me forgetful of the fiction, and bore me away with the power of reality and truth. If this be acting, said I, as I returned home, I may as well make the theatre my school, and henceforward study nature at second hand.

How can I describe one who is nearly as versatile and almost as full of beauties as nature itself—who grows upon us the more we are acquainted with him, and makes us sensible that the first time we saw him in any part, however much he may have moved us, we had but a vague and poor apprehension of the many excellencies of his acting. We cease to consider it as a mere amusement: It is a great intellectual feast; and he who goes to it with a disposition and capacity to relish it will receive from it more nourishment for his mind than he would be likely to in many other ways in fourfold the time. Our faculties are opened and enlivened by it; our reflections and recollections are of an elevated kind; and the very voice which is sounding in our ears long after we have left him creates an inward harmony which is for our good.

Kean, in truth, stands very much in that relation to other players whom we have seen, that Shakespeare does to other dramatists. One player is called classical; another makes fine points here, and another there. Kean makes more fine points than all of them together; but in him these are only little prominences, showing their bright heads above a beautifully undulated surface. A constant change is going on in him, partaking of the nature of the varying scenes he is passing through,

and the many thoughts and feelings which are shifting within him.

In a clear autumnal day we may see here and there a deep white cloud shining with metallic brightness against a blue sky, and now and then a dark pine swinging its top in the wind with the melancholy sound of the sea; but who can note the shifting and untiring play of the leaves of the wood and their passing hues, when each one seems a living thing full of delight, and vain of its gaudy attire? A sound, too, of universal harmony is in our ears, and a wide-spread beauty before our eyes, which we cannot define; yet a joy is in our hearts. Our delight increases in these, day after day, the longer we give ourselves to them, till at last we become as it were a part of the existence without us. So it is with natural characters. They grow upon us imperceptibly till we become fast bound up in them, we scarce know when or how. So it will fare with the actor who is deeply filled with nature, and is perpetually throwing off her beautiful evanescences. Instead of becoming tired of him, as we do, after a time, of others, he will go on, giving something which will be new to the observing mind; and will keep the feelings alive, because their action will be natural. I have no doubt that, excepting those who go to a play as children look into a show-box to admire and exclaim at distorted figures, and raw, unharmonious colors, there is no man of a moderately warm temperament, and with a tolerable share of insight into human nature, who would not find his interest in Kean increasing with a study of him. It is very possible that the excitement would in some degree lessen, but there would be a quieter delight, instead of it, stealing upon him as he became familiar with the character of his acting.

The versatility in his playing is striking. He seems not the same being, taking upon him at one time the character of Richard, at another that of Hamlet; but the two characters appear before you as distinct individuals, who had never known nor heard of each other. So completely does he become the character he is to represent that we have sometimes thought it a reason why he was not universally better liked here in Richard; and that because the player did not make *himself* a little more visible, he must needs bear a share of our hate towards the cruel king. And this may the more be the case, as his construction of

the character, whether right or wrong, creates in us an unmixed dislike of Richard, till the anguish of his mind makes him the object of pity; from which moment to the close, Kean is allowed to play the part better than anyone has before him.

In his highest wrought passion, when every limb and muscle are alive and quivering, and his gestures hurried and violent, nothing appears rantèd or over-acted; because he makes us feel that, with all this, there is something still within him vainly struggling for utterance. The very breaking and harshness of his voice in these parts, though upon the whole it were better otherwise, help to this impression upon us, and make up in a good degree for the defect.

Though he is on the very verge of truth in his passionate parts, he does not pass into extravagance; but runs along the dizzy edge of the roaring and beating sea, with feet as sure as we walk our parlors. We feel that he is safe, for some preternatural spirit upholds him as it hurries him onward; and while all is uptorn and tossing in the whirl of the passions, we see that there is a power and order over the whole.

A man has feelings sometimes which can only be breathed out; there is no utterance for them in words. I had hardly written this when the terrible and indistinct, "Ha!" with which Kean makes Lear hail Cornwall and Regan, as they enter, in the fourth scene of the second act, came to my mind. That cry seemed at the time to take me up and sweep me along in its wild swell. No description in the world could give a tolerably clear notion of it; it must be formed, as well as it may be, from what has just been said of its effect.

Kean's playing is frequently giving instances of various, inarticulate sounds—the throttled struggle of rage, and the choking of grief—the broken laugh of extreme suffering, when the mind is ready to deliver itself over to an insane joy—the utterance of over-full love, which cannot, and would not speak in express words—and that of bewildering grief, which blanks all the faculties of man.

No other player whom I have heard has attempted these, except now and then; and should anyone have made the trial in the various ways in which Kean gives them, no doubt he would have failed. Kean thrills us with them as if they were wrung from him in his agony. They have no appearance of study or



artifice. The truth is, that the labor of a mind of his genius constitutes its existence and delight. It is not like the toil of ordinary men at their task-work. What shows effort in them comes from him with the freedom and force of nature.

Some object to the frequent use of such sounds; and to others they are quite shocking. But those who permit themselves to consider that there are really violent passions in man's nature, and that they utter themselves a little differently from our ordinary feelings, understand and feel their language, as they speak to us in Kean. Probably no actor ever conceived passion with the intenseness and life that he does. It seems to enter into him and possess him, as evil spirits possessed men of old. It is curious to observe how some who have sat very contentedly year after year, and called the face-making which they have seen expression, and the stage-stride dignity, and the noisy declamation, and all the rhodomontade of acting, energy and passion, complain that Kean is apt to be extravagant; when in truth he seems to be little more than a simple personation of the feeling or passion to be expressed at the time.

It has been so common a saying that Lear is the most difficult of all characters to personate, that we had taken it for granted no man could play it so as to satisfy us. Perhaps it is the hardest to represent. Yet the part which has generally been supposed the most difficult, the insanity of Lear, is scarcely more so than the choleric old King. Inefficient rage is almost always ridiculous; and an old man, with a broken-down body and a mind falling in pieces from the violence of its uncontrolled passions, is in constant danger of exciting along with our pity a feeling of contempt. It is a chance matter to which we are moved. And this it is which makes the opening of Lear so difficult.

We may as well notice here the objection which some make to the abrupt violence with which Kean begins in Lear. If this is a fault, it is Shakespeare, and not Kean, who is to blame. For we have no doubt that he has conceived it according to his author. Perhaps, however, the mistake lies in this case, where it does in most others—with those who put themselves into the seat of judgment to pass upon greater men.

In most instances Shakespeare has given us the gradual growth of a passion with such little accompaniments as agree

with it, and go to make up the whole man. In Lear, his object being to represent the beginning and course of insanity, he has properly enough gone but a little back of it, and introduced to us an old man of good feelings, but one who had lived without any true principle of conduct, and whose ungoverned passions had grown strong with age, and were ready, upon any disappointment, to make shipwreck of an intellect always weak. To bring this about he begins with an abruptness rather unusual; and the old King rushes in before us with all his passions at their height, and tearing him like fiends.

Kean gives this as soon as a fit occasion offers itself. Had he put more of melancholy and depression, and less of rage into the character, we should have been very much puzzled at his so suddenly going mad. It would have required the change to have been slower; and, besides, his insanity must have been of another kind. It must have been monotonous and complaining, instead of continually varying; at one time full of grief, at another playful, and then wild as the winds that roared about him, and fiery and sharp as the lightning that shot by him. The truth with which he conceived this was not finer than his execution of it. Not for an instant, in his utmost violence, did he suffer the imbecility of the old man's anger to touch upon the ludicrous: when nothing but the most just conception and feeling of character could have saved him from it.

It has been said that Lear was a study for anyone who would make himself acquainted with the workings of an insane mind. There is no doubt of it. Nor is it less true that the acting of Kean was a complete embodying of these workings. His eye, when his senses are first forsaking him, giving a questioning look at what he saw, as if all before him was undergoing a strange and bewildering change which confused his brain—the wandering, lost motions of his hands, which seemed feeling for something familiar to them, on which they might take hold and be assured of a safe reality—the under monotone of his voice, as if he was questioning his own being, and all which surrounded him—the continuous, but slight oscillating motion of the body—all these expressed with fearful truth the dreamy state of a mind fast unsettling, and making vain and weak efforts to find its way back to its wonted reason. There was a childish, feeble gladness in the eye, and a half piteous smile about the

mouth at times, which one could scarce look upon without shedding tears. As the derangement increased upon him, his eye lost its notice of what surrounded him, wandering over everything as if he saw it not, and fastening upon the creatures of his crazed brain. The helpless and delighted fondness with which he clings to Edgar as an insane brother, is another instance of the justness of Kean's conceptions. Nor does he lose the air of insanity even in the fine moralizing parts, and where he inveighs against the corruptions of the world: There is a madness even in his reason.

The violent and immediate changes of the passions in Lear, so difficult to manage without offending us, are given by Kean with a spirit and with a fitness to nature which we had hardly imagined possible. These are equally well done both before and after he loses his reason. The most difficult scene, in this respect, is the last interview between Lear and his daughters, Goneril and Regan—(and how wonderfully does Kean carry it through!)—the scene which ends with the horrid shout and cry with which he runs out mad from their presence, as if his very brain had taken fire.

The last scene which we are allowed to have of Shakespeare's Lear, for the simply pathetic, was played by Kean with unmatched power. We sink down helpless under the oppressive grief. It lies like a dead weight upon our bosoms. We are denied even the relief of tears; and are thankful for the startling shudder that seizes us when he kneels to his daughter in the deploring weakness of his crazed grief.

It is lamentable that Kean should not be allowed to show his unequalled powers in the last scene of Lear, as Shakespeare has written it; and that this mighty work of genius should be profaned by the miserable, mawkish sort of Edgar's and Cordelia's loves: Nothing can surpass the impertinence of the man who made the change but the folly of those who sanctioned it.

When I began, I had no other intention than that of giving a few general impressions made upon me by Kean's acting; but, falling accidentally upon his Lear, I have been led into more particulars than I was aware of. It is only to take these as some of the instances of his powers in Lear, and then to think of him as not inferior in his other characters, and a slight notion may be formed of the effect of Kean's playing upon those who

understand and like him. Neither this, nor all I could say, would reach his great and various powers.

Kean is never behind his author; but stands forward the living representative of the character he has drawn. When he is not playing in Shakespeare he fills up where his author is wanting, and when in Shakespeare, he gives not only what is set down, but whatever the situation and circumstances attendant upon the being he personates would naturally call forth. He seems, at the time, to have possessed himself of Shakespeare's imagination, and to have given it body and form. Read any scene of Shakespeare—for instance, the last of *Lear* that is played, and see how few words are there set down, and then remember how Kean fills it out with varied and multiplied expressions and circumstances, and the truth of this remark will be obvious at once. There are few men, I believe, let them have studied the plays of Shakespeare ever so attentively, who can see Kean in them without confessing that he has helped them almost as much to a true conception of the author as their own labors had done for them.

It is not easy to say in what character Kean plays best. He so fits himself to each in turn that if the effect he produces at one time is less than at another, it is because of some inferiority in stage-effect in the character. *Othello* is probably the greatest character for stage-effect; and Kean has an uninterrupted power over us in playing it. When he commands, we are awed; when his face is all sensitive with love, and love thrills in his soft tones, all that our imaginations had pictured to us is realized. His jealousy, his hate, his fixed purposes, are terrific and deadly; and the groans wrung from him in his grief have the pathos and anguish of *Esau's* when he stood before his old blind father, and sent up "an exceeding bitter cry."

Again, in *Richard*, how does he hurry forward to his object, sweeping away all between him and it! The world and its affairs are nothing to him till he gains his end. He is all life, and action, and haste—he fills every part of the stage, and seems to do all that is done.

I have before said that his voice is harsh and breaking in his high tones, in his rage, but that this defect is of little consequence in such places. Nor is it well suited to the more declamatory parts. This again is scarce worth considering; for

how very little is there of mere declamation in good English plays! But it is one of the finest voices in the world for all the passions and feelings which can be uttered in the middle and lower tones. In Lear:

"If you have poison for me I will drink it."

And again,

"You do me wrong to take me o' the grave.  
Thou art a soul in bliss."

Why should I cite passages? Can any man open upon the scene in which these are contained, without Kean's piteous looks and tones being present to him? And does not the mere remembrance of them, as he reads, bring tears into his eyes? Yet, once more, in Othello:

"Had it pleased heaven  
To try me with affliction," etc.

In the passage beginning with—

"O now forever  
Farewell the tranquil mind,"—

there was "a mysterious confluence of sounds" passing off into infinite distance, and every thought and feeling within him seemed travelling with them.

How very graceful he is in Othello. It is not a practised, educated grace, but the "unbought grace" of his genius uttering itself in its beauty and grandeur in each movement of the outward man. When he says to Iago so touchingly, "Leave me, leave me, Iago," and turning from him, walks to the back of the stage, raising his hands, and bringing them down upon his head with clasped fingers, and stands thus with his back to us, there is a grace and imposing grandeur in his figure which we gaze on with admiration.

Talking of these things in Kean is something like reading the "Beauties of Shakespeare"; for he is as good in his subordinate as in his great parts. But he must be content to share with other men of genius, and think himself fortunate if one in a hundred sees his lesser beauties, and marks the truth and deli-

cacy of his under playing. For instance; when he has no share in the action going on, he is not busy in putting himself into attitudes to draw attention, but stands or sits in a simple posture, like one with an engaged mind. His countenance is in a state of ordinary repose, with only a slight, general expression of the character of his thoughts; for this is all the face shows when the mind is taken up in silence with its own reflections. It does not assume marked or violent expressions, as in soliloquy. When a man gives utterance to his thoughts, though alone, the charmed rest of the body is broken; he speaks in his gestures too, and the countenance is put into a sympathizing action.

I was first struck with this in his Hamlet; for the deep and quiet interest so marked in Hamlet made the justness of Kean's playing, in this respect, the more obvious.

Since then, I have observed him attentively, and have found the same true acting in his other characters.

This right conception of situation and its general effect, seems to require almost as much genius as his conceptions of his characters. He deserves praise for it; for there is so much of the subtilty of nature in it, if I may so speak, that while a very few are able from his help to put themselves into the situation, and admire the justness of his acting in it, the rest, both those who like him upon the whole, as well as those who profess to see little that is good in him, will be very apt to let it pass by them without observing it.

Like most men, however, Kean receives a partial reward, at least, for his sacrifice of the praise of the many to what he thinks the truth. For when he passes from the state of natural repose, even into that of gentle motion and ordinary discourse, he is at once filled with a spirit and life which he makes everyone feel who is not armor-proof against him. This helps to the sparkling brightness and warmth of his playing; the grand secret of which, like that of colors in a picture, lies in a just contrast. We can all speculate concerning the general rules upon this; but when the man of genius gives us their results, how few are there who can trace them out with an observant eye, or look with a full pleasure upon the grand whole. Perhaps this very beauty in Kean has helped to an opinion, which, no doubt, is sometimes true, that he is too sharp and abrupt. For I well remember, while once looking at a picture in which the shadow

of a mountain fell in strong outline upon a stream, I overheard some quite sensible people expressing their wonder that the artist should have made the water of two colors, seeing it was all one and the same thing.

Instances of Kean's keeping of situations were very striking in the opening of the trial scene in the "Iron Chest," and in "Hamlet" when the father's ghost tells the story of his death.

The determined composure to which he is bent up in the first must be present with everyone who saw him. And, though from my immediate purpose, shall I pass by the startling and appalling change, when madness seized upon his brain with the deadly swiftness and power of a fanged monster? Wonderfully as this last part was played, we cannot well imagine how much the previous calm and the suddenness of the unlooked-for change from it added to the terror of the scene. The temple stood fixed on its foundations; the earthquakes shook it, and it was a heap. Is this one of Kean's violent contrasts?

While Kean listened in Hamlet to the father's story the entire man was absorbed in deep attention, mingled with a tempered awe. His posture was quite simple, with a slight inclination forward. The spirit was the spirit of his father whom he had loved and revered, and who was to that moment ever present in his thoughts. The first superstitious terror at meeting him had passed off. The account of his father's appearance given him by Horatio and the watch, and his having followed him some distance, had in a degree familiarized him to the sight, and he stood before us in the stillness of one who was to hear, then or never, what was to be told, but without that eager reaching forward which other players give, and which would be right, perhaps, in any character but that of Hamlet, who always connects with the present the past and what is to come, and mingles reflection with his immediate feelings, however deep.

As an instance of Kean's familiar, and, if I may be allowed the term, domestic acting, the first scene in the fourth act of his *Sir Giles Overreach* may be taken. His manner at meeting Lovell, and through the conversation with him, the way in which he turns his chair and leans upon it, were all as easy and natural as they could have been in real life had Sir Giles been actually existing, and engaged at that moment in conversation in

It is in these things, scarcely less than in the more prominent parts of his playing, that Kean shows himself the great actor. He must always make a deep impression; but to suppose the world at large capable of a right estimate of his various powers would be forming a judgment against every-day proof. The gradual manner in which the character of his playing has opened upon me satisfies me that in acting, as in everything else, however great may be the first effect of genius upon us, we come slowly, and through study, to a perception of its minute beauties and fine characteristics; and that, after all, the greater part of men seldom get beyond the first vague and general impression.

As there must needs go a *modicum* of fault-finding along with commendation, it may be proper to remark that Kean plays his hands too much at times, and moves about the dress over his breast and neck too frequently in his hurried and impatient passages—that he does not always adhere with sufficient accuracy to the received readings of Shakespeare, and that the effect would be greater upon the whole were he to be more sparing of sudden changes from violent voice and gesticulation to a low conversation tone and subdued manner.

His frequent use of these in Sir Giles Overreach is with great effect, for Sir Giles is playing his part; so, too, in Lear, for Lear's passions are gusty and shifting; but, in the main, it is a kind of playing too marked and striking to bear frequent repetition, and had better sometimes be spared, where, considered alone, it might be properly enough used for the sake of bringing it in at some other place with greater effect.

It is well to speak of these defects, for though the little faults of genius, in themselves considered, but slightly affect those who can enter into its true character, yet such persons are made impatient at the thought that an opportunity is given those to carp who know not how to commend.

Though I have taken up a good deal of room, I must end without speaking of many things which occur to me. Some will be of the opinion that I have already said enough. Thinking of Kean as I do, I could not honestly have said less; for I hold it to be a low and wicked thing to keep back from merit of any kind its due—and, with Steele, that "there is something wonderful in the narrowness of those minds which can be pleased, and be barren of bounty to those who please them."



Although the self-important, out of self-concern, give praise sparingly, and the mean measure theirs by their likings or dislikings of a man, and the good even are often slow to allow the talents of the faulty their due, lest they bring the evil into repute, yet it is the wiser as well as the honester course not to take away from an excellence because it neighbors upon a fault, nor to disparage another with a view to our own name, nor to rest our character for discernment upon the promptings of an unkind heart. Where God has not feared to bestow great powers we may not fear giving them their due; nor need we be parsimonious of commendation, as if there were but a certain quantity for distribution, and our liberality would be to our loss; nor should we hold it safe to detract from another's merit, as if we could always keep the world blind; lest we live to see him whom we disparaged praised, and whom we hated loved.

Whatever be his failings, give every man a full and ready commendation for that in which he excels; it will do good to our own hearts, while it cheers his. Nor will it bring our judgment into question with the discerning; for strong enthusiasm for what is great does not argue such an unhappy want of discrimination as that measured and cold approval which is bestowed alike upon men of mediocrity, and upon those of gifted minds.

**ESSAY ON AMERICAN POETRY**

—

**BY**

**WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT**

## WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

1794—1878

William Cullen Bryant was born at Cummington, a small town in Massachusetts, in 1794. His father was a physician of considerable mental attainments, and Bryant's early training under private tutors was extensive and thorough. In 1810 he entered the sophomore class of Williams College, which he left a year later to devote himself to the study of law. From his earliest boyhood Bryant was a lover of nature, and at fourteen he had written some verses his father thought worth publishing. At eighteen he wrote "Thanatopsis," the noblest poem yet written in America, but owing to his innate modesty it remained hidden in his desk for several years till it was discovered by his father, who sent it to the "North American Review," in which it was published in 1817. The next year "To a Waterfowl" was published in the same magazine three years after it was written. Bryant also wrote at this time a review of a collection of American poetry which appeared later in a somewhat changed form as an "Essay on American Poetry." In this paper, which is interesting to-day both on account of its subject-matter and the date of its appearance, Bryant passed in review all the writers of verse on this side of the Atlantic who had ventured into print save, as he expressed himself, some "whose passage to that oblivion toward which, to the honor of our country they were hastening," he did not wish to interrupt.

In 1825 Bryant abandoned the practice of law, leaving Great Barrington for New York to devote himself entirely to literary pursuits. In 1826 he became connected with the "Evening Post," of which he continued to be the editor and principal proprietor till his death. While struggling to secure a foothold in New York, Bryant contributed to the magazines many of his finest poems. For "The Death of the Flowers" he received a remuneration of two dollars, and was "abundantly satisfied." In 1821, soon after reading "The Ages" before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard, Bryant published a small volume containing many of his best poems. Ten years later a second volume was published, containing about eighty additional poems, and others were added to subsequent editions. In 1863 appeared "Thirty Poems," consisting wholly of later work. In 1870 his translation of the Iliad appeared, followed two years later by his translation of the Odyssey. Most of Bryant's energies were, however, of necessity directed to his journalistic activity, especially during the stormy period of the slavery agitation of secession and reconstruction. His idea of the importance of an editor's mission was a lofty one, and he made the "Evening Post" a power during the half century that he was identified with it. He died in 1878.

Bryant's literary style, both in poetry and prose, is marked by great purity and elegance. His editorials, written invariably in the confusion of a newspaper office, were models of English prose. In our estimate of Bryant we must be guided by the quality of his work rather than its quantity. As a poet of nature he holds justly the foremost place among the poets of America.

## ESSAY ON AMERICAN POETRY

OF the poetry of the United States<sup>1</sup> different opinions have been entertained, and prejudice on the one side and partiality on the other have equally prevented a just and rational estimate of its merits. Abroad our literature has fallen under unmerited contumely from those who were but slenderly acquainted with the subject on which they professed to decide; and at home it must be confessed that the swaggering and pompous pretensions of many have done not a little to provoke and excite the ridicule of foreigners. Either of these extremes exerts an injurious influence on the cause of letters in our country. To encourage exertion and embolden merit to come forward, it is necessary that they should be acknowledged and rewarded. Few will have the confidence to solicit what is wantonly withheld, or the courage to tread a path which presents no prospect but the melancholy wrecks of those who have gone before them. National gratitude, national pride—every high and generous feeling that attaches us to the land of our birth, or that exalts our characters as individuals—ask of us that we should foster the infant literature of our country, and that genius and industry, employing their efforts to hasten its perfection, should receive from our hands that celebrity which reflects as much honor on the nation which confers it as on those to whom it is extended. On the other hand, it is not necessary for these purposes—it is even detrimental—to bestow on mediocrity the praise due to excellence, and still more so is the attempt to persuade ourselves and others into an admiration of the faults of favorite writers. We make but a contemptible figure in the eyes of the world, and set ourselves up as objects of pity to our posterity, when we affect to rank the poets of our own country with those mighty masters of song who have flourished in Greece, Italy, and Britain. Such

<sup>1</sup> [This essay was first published in the "North American Review" for July, 1818.—*EDITOR.*]

extravagant admiration may spring from a praiseworthy and patriotic motive, but it seems to us that it defeats its own object of encouraging our literature, by seducing those who would aspire to the favor of the public into an imitation of imperfect models, and leading them to rely too much on the partiality of their countrymen to overlook their deficiencies. Were our rewards to be bestowed only on what is intrinsically meritorious, merit alone would have any apology for appearing before the public. The poetical adventurer should be taught that it is only the productions of genius, taste, and diligence that can find favor at the bar of criticism; that his writings are not to be applauded merely because they are written by an American and are not decidedly bad; and that he must produce some more satisfactory evidence of his claim to celebrity than an extract from the parish register. To show him what we expect of him, it is as necessary to point out the faults of his predecessors as to commend their excellences. He must be taught as well what to avoid as what to imitate. This is the only way of diffusing and preserving a pure taste, both among those who read and those who write, and, in our opinion, the only way of affording merit a proper and effectual encouragement.

It must, however, be allowed that the poetry of the United States, though it has not reached any high degree of perfection, is yet, perhaps, better than it could have been expected to be, considering that our nation has scarcely seen two centuries since its founders erected their cabins on its soil, and that our citizens are just beginning to find leisure to attend to intellectual refinements, to indulge in intellectual luxury, and to afford the means of rewarding intellectual excellence. For the first century after the settlement of this country, the few quaint and unskilful specimens of poetry which yet remain to us are looked upon merely as objects of curiosity, are preserved only in the cabinet of the antiquary, and give little pleasure if read without reference to the age and people which produced them. After this period a purer taste began to prevail. The poems of the Rev. John Adams, written in the early part of the eighteenth century, which have been considered as no bad specimens of the poetry of his time, are tolerably free from the faults of the generation that preceded him, and show the dawnings of an ambition of correctness and elegance. The

poetical writings of Joseph Green, Esq., who wrote about the middle of the same century, have been admired for their humor and the playful ease of their composition.

But previous to the contest which terminated in the independence of the United States we can hardly be said to have had any national poetry. Literary ambition was not then frequent amongst us—there was little motive for it, and few rewards. We were contented with considering ourselves as participating in the literary fame of that nation of which we were a part, and of which many of us were natives, and aspired to no separate distinction. And, indeed, we might well lay an equal claim, with those who remained on the British soil, to whatever glory the genius and learning, as well as the virtue and bravery, of other times reflected on the British name. These were qualities which ennobled our common ancestors; and, though their graves were not with us, and we were at a distance from the scenes and haunts which were hallowed by their deeds, their studies and their contemplations, yet we brought with us and preserved all the more valuable gifts which they left to their posterity and to mankind—their illumination, their piety, their spirit of liberty, reverence for their memory and example, and all the proud tokens of a generous descent.

Yet here was no theatre for the display of literary talent. The worshippers of fame could find no altars erected to that divinity in America, and he who would live by his pen must seek patronage in the parent country. Some men of taste and learning amongst us might occasionally amuse their leisure with poetical trifles, but a country struggling with the difficulties of colonization, and possessing no superfluous wealth, wanted any other class of men rather than poets. Accordingly, we find the specimens of American poetry before this period mostly desultory and occasional—rare and delicate extotics, cultivated only by the curious.

On our becoming an independent empire a different spirit began to manifest itself, and the general ambition to distinguish ourselves as a nation was not without its effect on our literature. It seems to us that it is from this time only that we can be said to have poets of our own, and from this period it is that we must date the origin of American poetry. About

this time flourished Francis Hopkinson, whose humorous ballad, entitled "The Battle of the Kegs," is in most of our memories, and some of whose attempts, though deficient in vigor, are not inelegant. The keen and forcible invectives of Dr. Church, which are still recollected by his contemporaries, received an additional edge and sharpness from the exasperated feelings of the times. A writer in verse of inferior note was Philip Freneau, whose pen seems to have been chiefly employed on political subjects, and whose occasional productions, distinguished by a coarse strength of sarcasm, and abounding with allusions to passing events, which is perhaps their greatest merit, attracted in their time considerable notice, and, in the year 1786, were collected into a volume. But the influence of that principle which awoke and animated the exertions of all who participated in the political enthusiasm of that time was still more strongly exemplified in the Connecticut poets—Trumbull, Dwight, Barlow, Humphreys, and Hopkins—who began to write about this period. In all the productions of these authors there is a pervading spirit of nationality and patriotism, a desire to reflect credit on the country to which they belonged, which seems, as much as individual ambition, to have prompted their efforts, and which at times gives a certain glow and interest to their manner.

"McFingal," the most popular of the writings of the former of these poets, first appeared in the year 1782. This pleasant satire on the adherents of Britain in those times may be pronounced a tolerably successful imitation of the great work of Butler, though, like every other imitation of that author, it wants that varied and inexhaustible fertility of allusion which made all subjects of thought, the lightest and most abstruse parts of learning—everything in the physical and moral world, in art or nature—the playthings of his wit. The work of Trumbull cannot be much praised for the purity of its diction. Yet, perhaps great scrupulousness in this particular was not consistent with the plan of the author, and, to give the scenes of this poem their full effect, it might have been thought necessary to adopt the familiar dialect of the country and the times. We think his "Progress of Dulness" a more pleasing poem, more finished and more perfect in its kind, and, though written in the same manner, more free from the constraint and servility

of imitation. The graver poems of Trumbull contain some vigorous and animated declamations.

Of Dr. Dwight we would speak with all the respect due to talents, to learning, to piety, and a long life of virtuous usefulness, but we must be excused from feeling any high admiration of his poetry. It seems to us modelled upon a manner altogether too artificial and mechanical. There is something strained, violent, and out of nature in all his attempts. His "Conquest of Canaan" will not secure immortality to its author. In this work he has been considered by some as by no means happy in the choice of his fable. However this may be, he has certainly failed to avail himself of the advantages it offered him; his epic wants the creations and colorings of an inventive and poetical fancy—the charm which, in the hands of genius, communicates an interest to the simplest incidents, and something of the illusion of reality to the most improbable fictions. The versification is remarkable for its unbroken monotony. Yet it contains splendid passages, which, separated from the body of the work, might be admired, but a few pages pall both on the ear and the imagination. It has been urged in its favor that the writer was young. The poetry of his maturer years does not, however, seem to possess greater beauties or fewer faults. The late Mr. Dennie at one time exerted his ingenuity to render this poem popular with his countrymen; in the year 1800 he published, in the "Farmers' Museum"—a paper printed at Walpole, of which he was the editor—a series of observations and criticisms on the "Conquest of Canaan," after the manner of Addison in those numbers of the "Spectator" which made Milton a favorite with the English people. But this attempt did not meet with success; the work would not sell, and loads of copies yet cumber the shelves of the booksellers. In the other poems of Dr. Dwight, which are generally open to the same criticisms, he sometimes endeavors to descend to a more familiar style, and entertains his reader with laborious attempts at wit; and here he is still unsuccessful. Parts of his "Greenfield Hill," and that most unfortunate of his productions, the "Triumph of Infidelity," will confirm the truth of this remark.

Barlow, when he began to write, was a poet of no incon-



siderable promise. His "Hasty Pudding," one of his earliest productions, is a good specimen of mock-heroic poetry, and his "Vision of Columbus," at the time of its first appearance, attracted much attention, and was hailed as an earnest of better things. It is no small praise to say that, when appointed by the General Assembly of Churches in Connecticut to revise Watts's "Version of the Psalms," and to versify such as were omitted in that work, he performed the task in a manner which made a near approach to the simplicity and ease of that poet who, according to Dr. Johnson, "has done better than anybody else what nobody has done well." In his maturer years Barlow became ambitious of distinguishing himself and doing honor to his country by some more splendid and important exertions of his talents, and, for this purpose, projected a national epic, in which was sung the "Discovery of America," the successful struggle of the States in the defence of their liberties, and the exalted prospects which were opening before them. It is to be regretted that a design so honorable and so generously conceived should have failed. In 1807 appeared the "Columbiad," which was his poem of the "Vision of Columbus," much enlarged, and with such variations as the feelings and reflections of his riper age and judgment led him to make. The "Columbiad" is not, in our opinion, so pleasing a poem in its present form as in that in which it was originally written. The plan of the work is utterly destitute of interest, and that which was at first sufficiently wearisome has become doubly so by being drawn out to its present length. Nor are the additions of much value, on account of the taste in which they are composed. Barlow, in his later poetry, attempted to invigorate his style, but, instead of drawing strength and salubrity from the pure wells of ancient English, he corrupted and debased it with foreign infusions. The imposing but unchaste glitter which distinguished the manner of Darwin and his imitators appears likewise to have taken strong hold on his fancy, and he has not scrupled to bestow on his poem much of this meretricious decoration. But, notwithstanding the bad taste in which his principal work is composed, notwithstanding he cannot be said to write with much pathos or many of the native felicities of fancy, there is yet enough in the poetry of Mr. Barlow to

prove that, had he fixed his eye on purer models, he might have excelled, not indeed in epic or narrative poetry nor in the delineation of passion and feeling, but in that calm, lofty, sustained style which suits best with topics of morality and philosophy, and for which the vigor and spirit of his natural manner, whenever he permits it to appear, show him to have been well qualified.

Humphreys was a poet of humbler pretensions. His writings, which were first collected in 1790, are composed in better taste than those of the two last, and if he has less genius, he has likewise fewer faults. Some of his lighter pieces are sufficiently pretty. He is most happy when he aims at nothing beyond an elegant mediocrity, and, to do him justice, this is generally the extent of his ambition. On the whole, he may be considered as sustaining a respectable rank among the poets of our country.

A writer of a different cast from those we have mentioned, and distinguished by a singular boldness of imagination as well as great humor, was Dr. Lemuel Hopkins, who, in 1786 and the year following, in conjunction with Trumbull, Barlow, and Humphreys, and other wits of that time, wrote the "Anarchiad," a satire on a plan similar to that of the "Rolliad," which appeared in the "New Haven Gazette" of those years, and of which the mildest parts are attributed to him. He was likewise author of the "Speech of Hesper," and some smaller poems, which have been praised for their wit. There is a coarseness, and want of polish in his style, and his imagination, daring and original, but unrestrained by a correct judgment, often wanders into absurdities and extravagances. Still if he had all the madness, he must be allowed to have possessed some of the inspiration of poetry.

One material error of taste pervades the graver productions of these authors, into which it would seem they were led by copying certain of the poets of England, who flourished near the period in which they began to write. It was their highest ambition to attain a certain lofty, measured, declamatory manner—an artificial elevation of style, from which it is impossible to rise or descend without abruptness and violence, and which allows just as much play and freedom to the faculties of the writer as a pair of stilts allows the body. The imagination is

confined to one trodden circle, doomed to the chains of a perpetual mannerism, and condemned to tinkle the same eternal tune, with its fetters. Their versification, though not equally exceptionable in all, is formed upon the same stately model of balanced and wearisome regularity. Another fault, which arises naturally enough out of the peculiar style which we have imputed to these poets, is the want of pathos and feeling in their writings; the heart is rarely addressed, and never with much power or success. Amidst this coldness of manner, sameness of imagery, and monotony of versification, the reader lays down his book, dazzled and fatigued.

In 1800 appeared the poems of William Clifton, who fell, at the age of twenty-seven, a victim to that scourge of our climate which ceases not to waste when other diseases are sated—the pulmonary consumption. There is none of our American poetry on which we dwell with more pleasure, mingled, indeed, with regret at the untimely fate of the writer, than these charming remains. Amidst many of the immature effusions of his greener years, and unfinished productions which were never meant to meet the eye of the world, there are to be found specimens of poetry, not only more delicate, classical, and polished, but more varied in imagery, and possessing more of that flexibility of style, of the want of which in others we have complained, and more faithful to nature and the feelings, than it has often been our lot to meet with in the works of our native poets. In his later and more finished productions his diction is refined to an unusual degree of purity, and through this lucid medium the creations of his elegant fancy appear, with nothing to obscure their loveliness.

The posthumous works of St. John Honeywood, Esq., were published in the year 1801. These modest remains, the imperfect but vigorous productions of no common mind, have not been noticed as they deserved. They contain many polished and nervous lines.

We should not expect to be easily pardoned were we to pass by the writings of a poet who enjoyed, during his lifetime, so extensive a popularity as the late Mr. Paine.<sup>2</sup> The first glow of admiration, which the splendid errors of his man-

<sup>2</sup> [Robert Treat Paine, an American poet of great promise, whose collected works were published in 1812, is here referred to. He was the son of Robert

Treat Paine, the statesman and signer of the Declaration of Independence.—  
EDITOR.]

ner excited in the public, is now over, and we can calmly estimate his merits and defects. He must be allowed to have possessed an active and fertile fancy. Even in the misty obscurity which often shrouds his conceptions, not only from the understanding of the reader, but, it would seem, from that of the writer himself, there sometimes break out glimpses of greatness and majesty. Yet with a force and exuberance of imagination which, if soberly directed, might have gained him the praise of magnificence, he is perpetually wandering in search of conceits and extravagances. He is ambitious of the epigrammatic style, and often bewilders himself with attempts to express pointedly what he does not conceive clearly. More instances of the false sublime might, perhaps, be selected from the writings of this poet than from those of any other of equal talents who lived in the same period. The brilliancy of Paine's poetry is like the brilliancy of frost-work—cold and fantastic. Who can point out the passage in his works in which he speaks to the heart in its own language? He was a fine but misguided genius.

With respect to the style of poetry prevailing at the present day in our country, we apprehend that it will be found, in too many instances, tinged with a sickly and affected imitation of the peculiar manner of some of the late popular poets of England. We speak not of a disposition to emulate whatever is beautiful and excellent in their writings, still less would we be understood as intending to censure that sort of imitation which, exploring all the treasures of English poetry, culls from all a diction that shall form a natural and becoming dress for the conceptions of the writer—this is a course of preparation which everyone ought to go through before he appears before the public—but we desire to set a mark on that servile habit of copying which adopts the vocabulary of some favorite author, and apes the fashion of his sentences, and cramps and forces the ideas into a shape which they would not naturally have taken, and of which the only recommendation is, not that it is most elegant or most striking, but that it bears some resemblance to the manner of him who is proposed as a model. This way of writing has an air of poverty and meanness; it seems to indicate a paucity of reading as well as a perversion of taste; it might almost lead us to suspect that the writer had

but one or two examples of poetical composition in his hands, and was afraid of expressing himself, except according to some formula which they might contain; and it ever has been, and ever will be, the resort of those who are sensible that their works need some factitious recommendation to give them even a temporary popularity.

We have now given a brief summary of what we conceive to be the characteristic merits and defects of our most celebrated American poets. Some names, of which we are not at present aware, equally deserving of notice with those whom we have mentioned, may have been omitted; some we have passed over because we would not willingly disturb their passage to that oblivion toward which, to the honor of our country, they are hastening; and some elegant productions of later date we have not commented on, because we were unwilling to tire our readers with a discussion which they may think already exhausted.

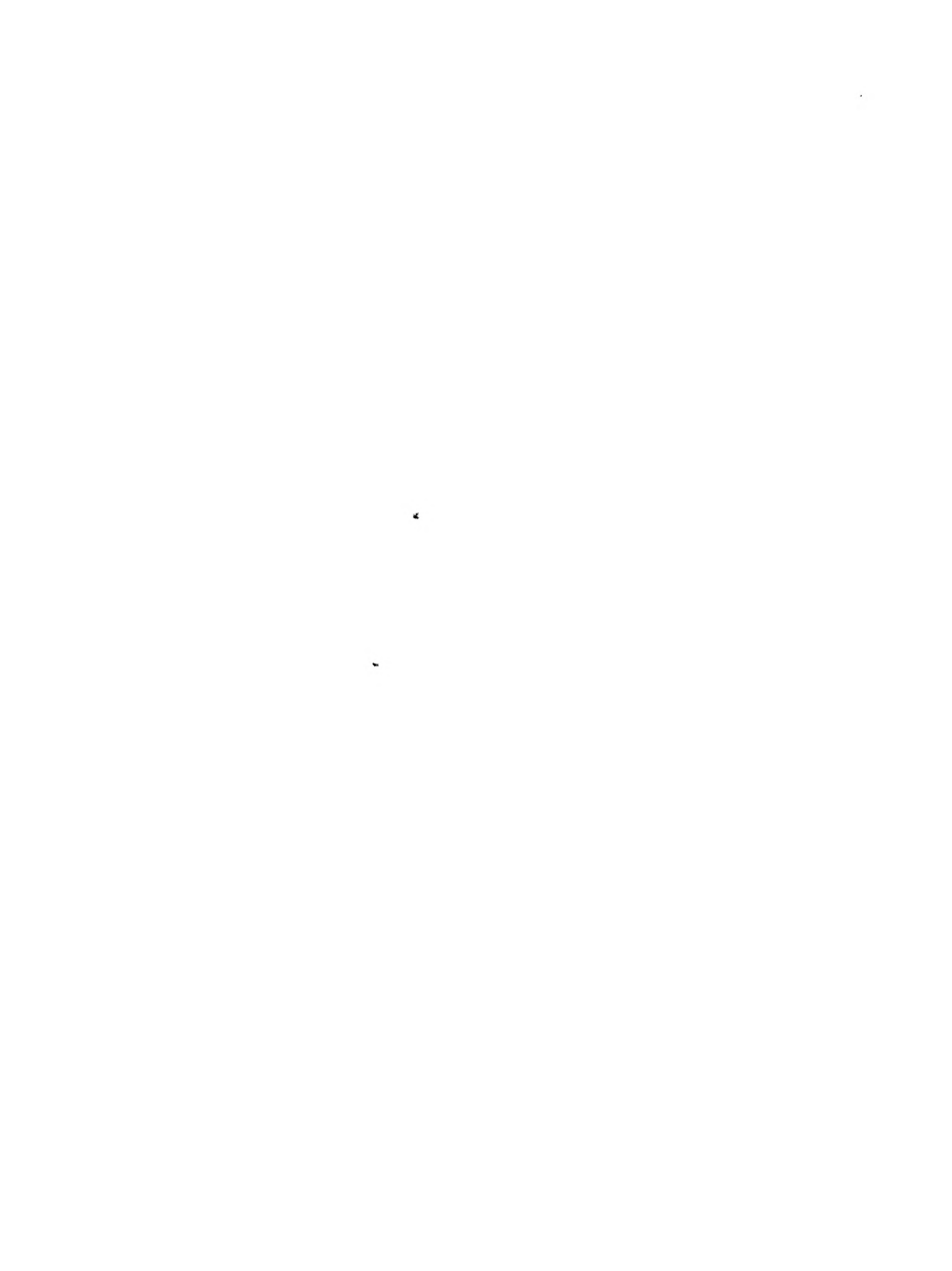
On the whole, there seems to be more good taste among those who read than those who write poetry in our country. With respect to the poets whom we have enumerated, and whose merits we have discussed, we think the judgment pronounced on their works by the public will be found, generally speaking, just. They hold that station in our literature to which they are entitled, and could hardly be admired more than they are without danger to the taste of the nation. We know of no instance in which great poetical merit has come forward, and, finding its claims unallowed, been obliged to retire to the shade from which it emerged. Whenever splendid talents of this description shall appear, we believe that there will be found a disposition to encourage and reward them. The fondness for literature is fast increasing, and, if this were not the case, the patrons of literature have multiplied, of course, and will continue to multiply with the mere growth of our population. The popular English works of the day are often reprinted in our country, they are dispersed all over the Union; they are found in everybody's hands, they are made the subject of everybody's conversation. What should hinder our native works, if equal in merit, from meeting an equally favorable reception?











SIR WALTER SCOTT

—

BY

WILLIAM HICKLING PRESCOTT

## WILLIAM HICKLING PRESCOTT

1796—1859

William Hickling Prescott was born in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1796. His father was a prominent and wealthy lawyer who almost idolized his handsome and talented son. He entered Harvard College in 1811, intending to study law on his graduation, but during his junior year met with an accident to one of his eyes that changed all his life plans. Oculists both in this country and abroad were consulted, but in spite of expert treatment he became practically blind. Under these depressing circumstances he took up the study of literature with a view to making it his life work. He began a year of study, with the aid of a reader and an amanuensis, desiring in this way to perfect himself in style and in general culture. Then, in 1826, he decided to take up the "Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella" as his first subject of historical study and investigation. After three years and a half of preparation he began to write, but even then, so painstaking and thorough was his work that at the end of sixteen months only three hundred pages were completed. Ten years passed before the volumes were issued from the press. To the astonishment of author and publisher alike, copies could not be printed fast enough to meet the demand, and Prescott found himself suddenly famous. He next devoted six years to his "History of the Conquest of Mexico," which was brought out in 1843. Four years later "The Conquest of Peru" was published, and the "History of Philip II" begun. The first two volumes of the latter work came from the press in 1855, and a third volume was issued in 1858. Prescott, however, did not live to complete this volume. He died at his residence on Beacon Street in Boston in 1859.

Prescott has a twofold interest for the American student. Not only was he a great historian, but his writings have a distinct literary as well as historical value. Indeed, so brilliant is his literary method that some critics have questioned his historical accuracy, but later scholarship has borne him out in this respect, except, perhaps, in passages of "Mexico" and "Peru," where his Spanish authorities have since been found untrustworthy. Aside from his historical writings we have comparatively little from Prescott's pen. A number of articles were published in the "North American Review," chiefly historical and biographical, while a few are on purely literary topics. His essays on Italian poetry give proof of Prescott's literary culture and acumen as a critic, as does his admirable essay on "Sir Walter Scott." These, however, stand almost alone, and it is on his writings as an historian that Prescott's fame rests. That his reputation will be an enduring one there can be no doubt. His works still remain an authority and are as widely read as ever; they have lost none of their fascination, their vividness and power, in spite of the somewhat changed literary taste and the method of scientific investigation of our day.

Prescott's literary style, as Hallam declared, "appears to be nearly perfect." It is clear, vivid, full of movement, and abounds in dramatic passages of absorbing interest.

## SIR WALTER SCOTT

THERE is no kind of writing which has truth and instruction for its main object so interesting and popular, on the whole, as biography. History, in its larger sense, has to deal with masses, which, while they divide the attention by the dazzling variety of objects, from their very generality are scarcely capable of touching the heart. The great objects on which it is employed have little relation to the daily occupations with which the reader is most intimate. A nation, like a corporation, seems to have no soul; and its checkered vicissitudes may be contemplated rather with curiosity for the lessons they convey than with personal sympathy. How different are the feelings excited by the fortunes of an individual—one of the mighty mass, who in the page of history is swept along the current, unnoticed and unknown! Instead of a mere abstraction, at once we see a being like ourselves, “fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer” as we are. We place ourselves in his position, and see the passing current of events with the same eyes. We become a party to all his little schemes, share in his triumphs, or mourn with him in the disappointment of defeat. His friends become our friends. We learn to take an interest in their characters, from their relation to him. As they pass away from the stage, one after another, and as the clouds of misfortune, perhaps, or of disease, settle around the evening of his own day, we feel the same sadness that steals over us on a retrospect of earlier and happier hours. And, when at last we have followed him to the tomb, we close the volume, and feel that we have turned over another chapter in the history of life.

On the same principles, probably, we are more moved by the exhibition of those characters whose days have been passed in

the ordinary routine of domestic and social life than by those most intimately connected with the great public events of their age. What, indeed, is the history of such men but that of the times? The life of Wellington, or of Bonaparte, is the story of the wars and revolutions of Europe. But that of Cowper, gliding away in the seclusion of rural solitude, reflects all those domestic joys, and, alas! more than the sorrows, which gather round every man's fireside and his heart. In this way the story of the humblest individual, faithfully recorded, becomes an object of lively interest. How much is that interest increased in the case of a man like Scott, who, from his own fireside, has sent forth a voice to cheer and delight millions of his fellow men; whose life, indeed, passed within the narrow circle of his own village, as it were, but who, nevertheless, has called up more shapes and fantasies within that magic circle, acted more extraordinary parts, and afforded more marvels for the imagination to feed on, than can be furnished by the most nimble-footed, nimble-tongued traveller, from Marco Polo down to Mrs. Trollope, and that literary Sindbad, Captain Hall!

Fortunate as Sir Walter Scott was in his life, it is not the least of his good fortunes that he left the task of recording it to one so competent as Mr. Lockhart;<sup>1</sup> who, to a familiarity with the person and habits of his illustrious subject, unites such entire sympathy with his pursuits, and such fine tact and discrimination in arranging the materials for their illustration. We have seen it objected that the biographer has somewhat transcended his lawful limits in occasionally exposing what a nice tenderness for the reputation of Scott should have led him to conceal. But, on reflection, we are not inclined to adopt these views. It is, indeed, difficult to prescribe any precise rule by which the biographer should be guided in exhibiting the peculiarities, and still more the defects, of his subject. He should, doubtless, be slow to draw from obscurity those matters which are of a strictly personal and private nature, particularly when they have no material bearing on the character of the individual. But whatever the latter has done, said, or written to others, can rarely be made to come within this rule. A swell of panegyric, where everything is in broad sunshine, without the relief of a shadow to contrast it, is out of nature, and

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.," by J. G. Lockhart.

must bring discredit on the whole. Nor is it much better, when a sort of twilight mystification is spread over a man's actions, until, as in the case of all biographies of Cowper previous to that of Southey, we are completely bewildered respecting the real motives of conduct. If ever there was a character above the necessity of any management of this sort, it was Scott's; and we cannot but think that the frank exposition of the minor blemishes which sully it, by securing the confidence of the reader in the general fidelity of the portraiture, and thus disposing him to receive, without distrust, those favorable statements in his history which might seem incredible, as they certainly are unprecedented, is, on the whole, advantageous to his reputation. As regards the moral effect on the reader, we may apply Scott's own argument for not always recompensing suffering virtue, at the close of his fictions, with temporal prosperity, that such an arrangement would convey no moral to the heart whatever, since a glance at the great picture of life would show that virtue is not always thus rewarded.

In regard to the literary execution of Mr. Lockhart's work, the public voice has long since pronounced on it. A prying criticism may, indeed, discern a few of those contraband epithets, and slipshod sentences, more excusable in young "Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk," where, indeed, they are thickly sown, than in the production of a grave Aristarch of British criticism. But this is small game where every reader of the least taste and sensibility must find so much to applaud. It is enough to say that, in passing from the letters of Scott, with which the work is besprinkled, to the text of the biographer, we find none of those chilling transitions which occur on the like occasions in more bungling productions; as, for example, in that recent one, in which the unfortunate Hannah More is done to death by her friend Roberts. On the contrary, we are sensible only to a new variety of beauty in the style of composition. The correspondence is illumined by all that is needed to make it intelligible to a stranger, and selected with such discernment as to produce the clearest impression of the character of its author. The mass of interesting details is conveyed in language richly colored with poetic sentiment, and at the same time without a tinge of that mysticism which, as Scott himself truly remarked, "will never do for a writer of fiction, no, nor of history, nor

moral essays, nor sermons"; but which, nevertheless, finds more or less favor in our own community, at the present day, in each and all of these.

The work<sup>2</sup> from which the last remark of Sir Walter's was borrowed, is a series of notices originally published in "Fraser's Magazine," but now collected, with considerable additions, into a separate volume. Its author, Mr. Robert Pierce Gillies, is a gentleman of the Scotch bar, favorably known by translations from the German. The work conveys a lively report of several scenes and events which, before the appearance of Lockhart's book, were of more interest and importance than they can now be, lost as they are in the flood of light which is poured on us from that source. In the absence of the sixth and last volume, however, Mr. Gillies may help us to a few particulars respecting the closing years of Sir Walter's life that may have some novelty—we know not how much to be relied on—for the reader. In the present notice of a work so familiar to most persons we shall confine ourselves to some of those circumstances which contributed to form, or have an obvious connection with, his literary character.

Walter Scott was born at Edinburgh, August 15, 1771. The character of his father, a respectable member of that class of attorneys who in Scotland are called Writers to the Signet, is best conveyed to the reader by saying that he sat for the portrait of Mr. Saunders Fairford, in "Redgauntlet." His mother was a woman of taste and imagination, and had an obvious influence in guiding those of her son. His ancestors, by both father's and mother's side, were of "gentle blood"—a position which, placed between the highest and the lower ranks in society, was extremely favorable, as affording facilities for communication with both. A lameness in his infancy—a most fortunate lameness for the world, if, as Scott says, it spoiled a soldier—and a delicate constitution made it expedient to try the efficacy of country air and diet; and he was placed under the roof of his paternal grandfather at Sandy-Knowe, a few miles distant from the capital. Here his days were passed in the open fields, "with no other fellowship," as he says, "than that of the sheep and lambs"; and here, in the lap of nature—

"Meet nurse for a poetic child,"

<sup>2</sup> "Recollections of Sir Walter Scott," by R. P. Gillies.

his infant vision was greeted with those rude, romantic scenes which his own verses have since hallowed for the pilgrims from every clime. In the long evenings, his imagination, as he grew older, was warmed by traditionary legends of border heroism and adventure, repeated by the aged relative who had herself witnessed the last gleams of border chivalry. His memory was one of the first powers of his mind which exhibited an extraordinary development. One of the longest of these old ballads, in particular, stuck so close to it, and he repeated it with such stentorian vociferation, as to draw from the minister of a neighboring kirk the testy exclamation, "One may as well speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is."

On his removal to Edinburgh, in his eighth year, he was subjected to different influences. His worthy father was a severe martinet in all the forms of his profession, and it may be added, indeed, of his religion, which he contrived to make somewhat burdensome to his more volatile son. The tutor was still more strict in his religious sentiments, and the lightest literary *divertissement* in which either of them indulged was such as could be gleaned from the time-honored folios of Archbishop Spottiswoode, or worthy Robert Wodrow. Even here, however, Scott's young mind contrived to gather materials and impulses for future action. In his long arguments with Master Mitchell he became steeped in the history of the Covenanters and the persecuted Church of Scotland, while he was still more rooted in his own Jacobite notions, early instilled into his mind by the tales of his relatives of Sandy-Knowe, whose own family had been out in the "affair of forty-five." Amid the professional and polemical worthies of his father's library, Scott detected a copy of Shakespeare; and he relates with what *goût* he used to creep out of his bed, where he had been safely deposited for the night, and, by the light of the fire, *in puris naturalibus*, as it were, pore over the pages of the great magician, and study those mighty spells by which he gave to airy fantasies the forms and substance of humanity. Scott distinctly recollected the time and the spot where he first opened a volume of Percy's "Reliques of English Poetry"; a work which may have suggested to him the plan and the purpose of the "Border Minstrelsy." Every day's experience shows us



how much more actively the business of education goes on out of school than in it. And Scott's history shows equally that genius, whatever obstacles may be thrown in its way in one direction, will find room for its expansion in another; as the young tree sends forth its shoots most prolific in that quarter where the sunshine is permitted to fall on it.

At the high school, in which he was placed by his father at an early period, he seems not to have been particularly distinguished in the regular course of studies. His voracious appetite for books, however, of a certain cast, as romances, chivalrous tales, and worm-eaten chronicles scarcely less chivalrous, and his wonderful memory for such reading as struck his fancy, soon made him regarded by his fellows as a phenomenon of black-letter scholarship, which in process of time achieved for him the cognomen of that redoubtable schoolman, Duns Scotus. He now also gave evidence of his powers of creation as well as of acquisition. He became noted for his own stories, generally bordering on the marvellous, with a plentiful seasoning of knight-errantry, which suited his bold and chivalrous temper. "Slink over beside me, Jamie," he would whisper to his school-fellow Ballantyne, "and I'll tell you a story." Jamie was, indeed, destined to sit beside him during the greater part of his life.

The same tastes and talents continued to display themselves more strongly with increasing years. Having beaten pretty thoroughly the ground of romantic and legendary lore, at least so far as the English libraries to which he had access would permit, he next endeavored, while at the university, to which he had been transferred from the high school, to pursue the same subject in the Continental languages. Many were the strolls which he took in the neighborhood, especially to Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags, where, perched on some almost inaccessible eyrie, he might be seen conning over his Ariosto or Cervantes, or some other bard of romance, with some favorite companion of his studies, or pouring into the ears of the latter his own boyish legends, glowing with

". . . achievements high,  
And circumstance of chivalry."

A critical knowledge of these languages he seems not to have obtained; and, even in the French, made but an indifferent

figure in conversation. An accurate acquaintance with the pronunciation and prosody of a foreign tongue is undoubtedly a desirable accomplishment. But it is, after all, a mere accomplishment, subordinate to the great purposes for which a language is to be learned. Scott did not, as is too often the case, mistake the shell for the kernel. He looked on language only as the key to unlock the foreign stores of wisdom, the pearls of inestimable price, wherever found, with which to enrich his native literature.

After a brief residence at the university he was regularly indentured as an apprentice to his father, in 1786. One can hardly imagine a situation less congenial with the ardent, effervescing spirit of a poetic fancy; fettered down to a daily routine of drudgery, scarcely above that of a mere scrivener. It proved a useful school of discipline to him, however. It formed early habits of method, punctuality, and laborious industry; business habits, in short, most adverse to the poetic temperament, but indispensable to the accomplishment of the gigantic tasks which he afterward assumed. He has himself borne testimony to his general diligence in his new vocation, and tells us that on one occasion he transcribed no less than a hundred and twenty folio pages at a sitting.

In the midst of these mechanical duties, however, he did not lose sight of the favorite objects of his study and meditation. He made frequent excursions into the Lowland as well as Highland districts, in search of traditionary relics. These pilgrimages he frequently performed on foot. His constitution, now become hardy by severe training, made him careless of exposure, and his frank and warm-hearted manners—eminently favorable to his purposes, by thawing at once any feelings of frosty reserve, which might have encountered a stranger—made him equally welcome at the staid and decorous manse, and at the rough but hospitable board of the peasant. Here was indeed the study of the future novelist; the very school in which to meditate those models of character and situation which he was afterward, long afterward, to transfer, in such living colors, to the canvas. "He was makin' himsell a' the time," says one of his companions, "but he didna ken, maybe, what he was about, till years had past. At first he thought o' little, I dare say, but the queerness and the fun." The honest Writer to the

Signet does not seem to have thought it either so funny or so profitable; for on his son's return from one of these raids, as he styled them, the old gentleman peevishly inquired how he had been living so long. "Pretty much like the young ravens," answered Walter; "I only wished I had been as good a player on the flute as poor George Primrose in 'The Vicar of Wakefield.' If I had his art, I should like nothing better than to tramp like him 'rom cottage to cottage over the world." "I doubt," said the grave Clerk to the Signet, "I greatly doubt, sir, you were born for nae better than a *gangrel scrapegut!*" Perhaps even the revelation, could it have been made to him, of his son's future literary glory, would scarcely have satisfied the worthy father, who, probably, would have regarded a seat on the bench of the Court of Sessions as much higher glory. At all events, this was not far from the judgment of Dominie Mitchell, who, in his notice of his illustrious pupil, "sincerely regrets that Sir Walter's precious time was so much devoted to the *dulce* rather than the *utile* of composition, and that his great talents should have been wasted on such subjects"!

It is impossible to glance at Scott's early life without perceiving how powerfully all its circumstances, whether accidental or contrived, conspired to train him for the peculiar position he was destined to occupy in the world of letters. There never was a character in whose infant germ, as it were, the mature and fully developed lineaments might be more distinctly traced. What he was in his riper age, so he was in his boyhood. We discern the same tastes, the same peculiar talents, the same social temper and affections, and, in a great degree, the same habits—in their embryo state, of course, but distinctly marked—and his biographer has shown no little skill in enabling us to trace their gradual, progressive expansion, from the hour of his birth up to the full prime and maturity of manhood.

In 1792, Scott, whose original destination of a Writer had been changed to that of an Advocate—from his father's conviction, as it would seem, of the superiority of his talents to the former station—was admitted to the Scottish bar. Here he continued in assiduous attendance during the regular terms, but more noted for his stories in the Outer House than his arguments in court. It may appear singular that a person so

gifted, both as a writer and as a *raconteur*, should have had no greater success in his profession. But the case is not uncommon. Indeed, experience shows that the most eminent writers have not made the most successful speakers. It is not more strange than that a good writer of novels should not excel as a dramatic author. Perhaps a consideration of the subject would lead us to refer the phenomena in both cases to the same principle. At all events, Scott was an exemplification of both; and we leave the solution to those who have more leisure and ingenuity to unravel the mystery.

Scott's leisure, in the mean time, was well employed in storing his mind with German romance, with whose wild fictions, intrenching on the grotesque, indeed, he found at that time more sympathy than in later life. In 1796 he first appeared before the public as a translator of Bürger's well-known ballads, thrown off by him at a heat, and which found favor with the few into whose hands they passed. He subsequently adventured in Monk Lewis's crazy bark—"Tales of Wonder"—which soon went to pieces, leaving, however, among its surviving fragments the scattered contributions of Scott.

At last, in 1802, he gave to the world his first two volumes of the "Border Minstrelsy," printed by his old school-fellow, Ballantyne, and which, by the beauty of the typography, as well as literary execution, made a sort of epoch in Scottish literary history. There was no work of Scott's after-life which showed the result of so much preliminary labor. Before ten years old, he had collected several volumes of ballads and traditions, and we have seen how diligently he pursued the same vocation in later years. The publication was admitted to be far more faithful, as well as more skilfully collated, than its prototype, the "Reliques" of Bishop Percy; while his notes contained a mass of antiquarian information relative to border life, conveyed in a style of beauty unprecedented in topics of this kind, and enlivened with a higher interest than poetic fiction. Percy's "Reliques" had prepared the way for the kind reception of the "Minstrelsy," by the general relish—notwithstanding Dr. Johnson's protest—it had created for the simple pictures of a pastoral and heroic time. Burns had since familiarized the English ear with the Doric melodies of his native land; and now a greater than Burns appeared, whose first production, by a singular

chance, came into the world in the very year in which the Ayrshire minstrel was withdrawn from it, as if nature had intended that the chain of poetic inspiration should not be broken. The delight of the public was further augmented on the appearance of the third volume of the "Minstrelsy," containing various imitations of the old ballad, which displayed all the rich fashion of the antique, purified from the mold and rust by which the beauties of such weather-beaten trophies are defaced.

The first edition of the "Minstrelsy," consisting of eight hundred copies, went off, as Lockhart tells us, in less than a year; and the poet, on the publication of a second, received £500 sterling from Longman—an enormous price for such a commodity, but the best bargain, probably, that the bookseller ever made, as the subsequent sale has since extended to twenty thousand copies.

Scott was not in great haste to follow up his success. It was three years later before he took the field as an independent author, in a poem which at once placed him among the great original writers of his country. The "Lay of the Last Minstrel," a complete expansion of the ancient ballad into an epic form, was published in 1805. It was opening a new creation in the realm of fancy. It seemed as if the author had transfused into his page the strong delineations of the Homeric pencil, the rude but generous gallantry of a primitive period, softened by the more airy and magical inventions of Italian romance,<sup>3</sup> and conveyed in tones of natural melody such as had not been heard since the strains of Burns. The book speedily found that unprecedented circulation which all his subsequent compositions attained. Other writers had addressed themselves to a more peculiar and limited feeling—to a narrower and generally a more select audience. But Scott was found to combine all the qualities of interest for every order. He drew from the pure springs which gush forth in every heart. His narrative chained every reader's attention by the stirring variety of its

<sup>3</sup> "Metteno lo Turpin, lo metto anch' io,"

says Ariosto, playfully, when he tells a particularly tough story.

"I cannot tell how the truth may be,  
I say the tale as 'twas said to me,"

says the author of the "Lay" on a similar occasion. The resemblance might be traced much further than mere forms of expression, to the Italian, who, like

" . . . the Ariosto of the North,  
Sung ladye-love, and war, romance, and knightly worth."

incidents, while the fine touches of sentiment with which it abounded, like wild flowers, springing up spontaneously around, were full of freshness and beauty, that made one wonder that others should not have stooped to gather them before.

The success of the "Lay" determined the course of its author's future life. Notwithstanding his punctual attention to his profession, his utmost profits for any one year of the ten he had been in practice had not exceeded £230; and of late they had sensibly declined. Latterly, indeed, he had coquetted somewhat too openly with the muse for his professional reputation. Themis has always been found a stern and jealous mistress, chary of dispensing her golden favors to those who are seduced into a flirtation with her more volatile sister.

Scott, however, soon found himself in a situation that made him independent of her favors. His income from the two offices to which he was promoted, of sheriff of Selkirk and clerk of the Court of Sessions, was so ample, combined with what fell to him by inheritance and marriage, that he was left at liberty freely to consult his own tastes. Amid the seductions of poetry, however, he never shrunk from his burdensome professional duties; and he submitted to all their drudgery with unflinching constancy, when the labors of his pen made the emoluments almost beneath consideration. He never relished the idea of being divorced from active life by the solitary occupations of a recluse. And his official functions, however severely they taxed his time, may be said to have, in some degree, compensated him by the new scenes of life which they were constantly disclosing—the very materials of those fictions on which his fame and his fortune were to be built.

Scott's situation was, on the whole, eminently propitious to literary pursuits. He was married, and passed the better portion of the year in the country, where the quiet pleasures of his fireside circle and a keen relish for rural sports relieved his mind and invigorated both health and spirits. In early life, it seems, he had been crossed in love; and, like Dante and Byron, to whom in this respect he is often compared, he has more than once, according to his biographer, shadowed forth in his verses the object of his unfortunate passion. He does not appear to have taken it so seriously, however, nor to have shown the morbid sensibility in relation to it discovered by both Byron and Dante,

the former of whom perhaps found his *cara sposa* so much too cold, as the latter certainly did his too hot, for his own temperament, as to seek relief from the present in the poetical visions of the past.

Scott's next great poem was his "Marmion," transcending, in the judgment of many, all his other epics, and containing, in the judgment of all, passages of poetic fire which he never equalled; but which, nevertheless, was greeted on its entrance into the world by a *critique* in the leading journal of the day of the most caustic and unfriendly temper. The journal was the "Edinburgh," to which he had been a frequent contributor, and the reviewer was his intimate friend Jeffrey. The unkindest cut in the article was the imputation of a neglect of Scottish character and feeling. "There is scarcely one trait of true Scottish nationality or patriotism introduced into the whole poem; and Mr. Scott's only expression of admiration for the beautiful country to which he belongs is put, if we rightly remember, into the mouth of one of his southern favorites." This of Walter Scott! The critic had some misgivings, it would seem, as to the propriety of the part he was playing, or at least as to its effect on the mind of his friend, since he sent a copy of the yet unpublished article to the latter on the day he was engaged to dine with him, with a request for a speedy answer. Scott testified no visible marks of vexation, although his wife was not so discreet, telling Jeffrey rather bluntly she hoped Constable would pay him well for abusing his friend. The gossips of the day in Edinburgh exaggerated the story into her actually turning the reviewer out of doors. He well deserved it.

The affair, however, led to important consequences. Scott was not slow after this in finding the political principles of the "Edinburgh" so repugnant to his own (and they certainly were as opposite as the poles) that he first dropped the journal, and next labored with unwearied diligence to organize another, whose main purpose should be to counteract the heresies of the former. This was the origin of the London "Quarterly," more imputable to Scott's exertions than to those of any, indeed all, other persons. The result has been, doubtless, highly serviceable to the interests of both morals and letters. Not that the new review was conducted with more fairness or, in this sense, principle than its antagonist. A remark of Scott's own,

in a letter to Ellis, shows with how much principle. "I have run up an attempt on 'The Curse of Kehama' for the 'Quarterly.' It affords cruel openings to the quizzers, and I suppose will get it roundly in the 'Edinburgh Review.' I would have made a very different hand of it, indeed, had the order of the day been *pour déchirer*." But, although the fate of the individual was thus, to a certain extent, a matter of caprice or rather prejudgment in the critic, yet the great abstract questions in morals, politics, and literature, by being discussed on both sides, were presented in a fuller and of course fairer light to the public. Another beneficial result to letters was—and we shall gain credit, at least, for candor in confessing it—that it broke down somewhat of that divinity which hedged in the despotic *we* of the reviewer, so long as no rival arose to contest the sceptre. The claims to infallibility, so long and slavishly acquiesced in, fell to the ground when thus stoutly asserted by conflicting parties. It was pretty clear that the same thing could not be all black and all white at the same time. In short, it was the old story of pope and antipope; and the public began to find out that there might be hopes for the salvation of an author, though damned by the literary popedom. Time, indeed, by reversing many of its decisions, must at length have shown the same thing.

But to return. Scott showed how nearly he had been touched to the quick by two other acts not so discreet. These were the establishment of an Annual Register, and of the great publishing house of the Ballantynes, in which he became a silent partner. The last step involved him in grievous embarrassments, and stimulated him to exertions which required "a frame of adamant and soul of fire" to have endured. At the same time, we find him overwhelmed with poetical, biographical, historical, and critical compositions, together with editorial labors of appalling magnitude. In this multiplication of himself in a thousand forms, we see him always the same, vigorous and effective. "Poetry," he says, in one of his letters, "is a scourging crop, and ought not to be hastily repeated. Editing, therefore, may be considered as a green crop of turnips or peas, extremely useful to those whose circumstances do not admit of giving their farm a summer fallow." It might be regretted, however, that he should have wasted powers fitted for so much higher culture



on the coarse products of a kitchen-garden, which might have been safely trusted to inferior hands.

In 1811 Scott gave to the world his exquisite poem, "The Lady of the Lake." One of his fair friends had remonstrated with him on thus risking again the laurel he had already won. He replied, with characteristic and indeed prophetic spirit: "If I fail, I will write prose all my life. But if I succeed—

" 'Up wi' the bonnie blue bonnet,  
The dirk and the feather an a'! ' "

In his eulogy on Byron, Scott remarks: "There has been no reposing under the shade of his laurels, no living upon the resource of past reputation; none of that coddling and petty precaution which little authors call 'taking care of their fame.' Byron let his fame take care of itself." Scott could not have more accurately described his own character.

"The Lady of the Lake" was welcomed with an enthusiasm surpassing that which attended any other of his poems. It seemed like the sweet breathings of his native pibroch, stealing over glen and mountain, and calling up all the delicious associations of rural solitude, which beautifully contrasted with the din of battle and the shrill cry of the war-trumpet that stirred the soul in every page of his "Marmion." The publication of this work carried his fame as a poet to its most brilliant height. Its popularity may be inferred from the fact stated by Lockhart, that the post-horse duty rose to an extraordinary degree in Scotland, from the eagerness of travellers to visit the localities of the poem. A more substantial evidence was afforded in its amazing circulation, and consequently its profits. The press could scarcely keep pace with the public demand, and no less than fifty thousand copies of it have been sold since the date of its appearance. The successful author realized more than two thousand guineas from his production. Milton received ten pounds for the two editions which he lived to see of his "Paradise Lost." The Ayrshire bard had sighed for "a lass wi' a tocher." Scott had now found one in the muse, such as no Scottish nor any other poet had ever found before.

While the poetical fame of Scott was thus at its zenith, a new star rose above the horizon, whose eccentric course and dazzling radiance completely bewildered the spectator. In 1812 "Childe

Harold " appeared, and the attention seemed to be now called, for the first time, from the outward form of man and visible nature to the secret depths of the soul. The darkest recesses of human passion were laid open, and the note of sorrow was prolonged in tones of agonized sensibility, the more touching as coming from one who was placed on those dazzling heights of rank and fashion which, to the vulgar eye at least, seem to lie in unclouded sunshine. Those of the present generation who have heard only the same key thrummed *ad nauseam* by the feeble imitators of his lordship can form no idea of the effect produced when the chords were first swept by the master's fingers. It was found impossible for the ear once attuned to strains of such compass and ravishing harmony to return with the same relish to purer, it might be, but tamer melody; and the sweet voice of the Scottish minstrel lost much of its power to charm, let him charm never so wisely. While "Rokeby" was in preparation bets were laid on the rival candidates by the wits of the day. The sale of this poem, though great, showed a sensible decline in the popularity of its author. This became still more evident on the publication of "The Lord of the Isles"; and Scott admitted the conviction with his characteristic spirit and good nature. "'Well, James,' he said to his printer, 'I have given you a week; what are people saying about "The Lord of the Isles"?' I hesitated a little, after the fashion of Gil Blas, but he speedily brought the matter to a point. 'Come,' he said, 'speak out, my good fellow; what has put it into your head to be on so much ceremony with me all of a sudden? But, I see how it is, the result is given in one word—disappointment.' My silence admitted his inference to the fullest extent. His countenance certainly did look rather blank for a few seconds; in truth, he had been wholly unprepared for the event. At length he said, with perfect cheerfulness: 'Well, well, James, so be it; but you know we must not droop, for we can't afford to give over. Since one line has failed, we must stick to something else.'" This something else was a mine he had already hit upon, of invention and substantial wealth, such as Thomas the Rhymer, or Michael Scott, or any other adept in the black art, had never dreamed of.

Everybody knows the story of the composition of "Waverley"—the most interesting story in the annals of letters—and

how, some ten years after its commencement, it was fished out of some old lumber in an attic, and completed in a few weeks for the press, in 1814. Its appearance marks a more distinct epoch in English literature than that of the poetry of its author. All previous attempts in the same school of fiction—a school of English growth—had been cramped by the limited information or talent of the writers. Smollett had produced his spirited sea-pieces, and Fielding his warm sketches of country life, both of them mixed up with so much Billingsgate as required a strong flavor of wit to make them tolerable. Richardson had covered acres of canvas with his faithful family pictures. Mrs. Radcliffe had dipped up to the elbows in horrors; while Miss Burney's fashionable gossip and Miss Edgeworth's Hogarth drawings of the prose—not the poetry—of life and character had each and all found favor in their respective ways. But a work now appeared in which the author swept over the whole range of character with entire freedom as well as fidelity, ennobling the whole by high historic associations, and in a style varying with his theme, but whose pure and classic flow was tintured with just so much of poetic coloring as suited the purposes of romance. It was Shakespeare in prose.

The work was published, as we know, anonymously. Mr. Gillies states, however, that while in the press fragments of it were communicated to "Mr. Mackenzie, Dr. Brown, Mrs. Hamilton, and other *savants* or *savantes*, whose dicta on the merits of a new novel were considered unimpeachable." By their approbation "a strong body of friends was formed, and the curiosity of the public prepared the way for its reception." This may explain the rapidity with which the anonymous publication rose into a degree of favor which, though not less surely, perhaps, it might have been more slow in achieving. The author jealously preserved his *incognito*, and, in order to heighten the mystification, flung off almost simultaneously a variety of works, in prose and poetry, any one of which might have been the labor of months. The public for a moment was at fault. There seemed to be six Richmonds in the field. The world, therefore, was reduced to the dilemma of either supposing that half a dozen different hands could work in precisely the same style, or that one could do the work of half a dozen. With time, however, the veil wore thinner and thinner, until at length,

and long before the ingenious argument of Mr. Adolphus, there was scarcely a critic so purblind as not to discern behind it the features of the mighty minstrel.

Constable had offered £700 for the new novel. "It was," says Lockhart, "ten times as much as Miss Edgeworth ever realized from any of her popular Irish tales." Scott declined the offer, which had been a good one for the bookseller had he made it as many thousand. But it passed the art of necromancy to divine this.

Scott, once entered on this new career, followed it up with an energy unrivalled in the history of literature. The public mind was not suffered to cool for a moment before its attention was called to another miracle of creation from the same hand. Even illness that would have broken the spirit of most men, as it prostrated the physical energies of Scott, opposed no impediment to the march of composition. When he could no longer write, he could dictate; and in this way, amid the agonies of a racking disease, he composed "The Bride of Lammermoor," the "Legend of Montrose," and a great part of "Ivanhoe." The first, indeed, is darkened with those deep shadows that might seem thrown over it by the sombre condition of its author. But what shall we say of the imperturbable dry humor of the gallant Captain Dugald Dalgetty of Drumthwacket, or of the gorgeous revelries of Ivanhoe—

"Such sights as youthful poets dream,  
On summer eves by haunted stream"—

what shall we say of such brilliant day-dreams for a bed of torture? Never before had the spirit triumphed over such agonies of the flesh. "The best way," said Scott, in one of his talks with Gillies, "is, if possible, to triumph over disease by setting it at defiance, somewhat on the same principle as one avoids being stung by boldly grasping a nettle."

The prose fictions were addressed to a much larger audience than the poems could be. They had attractions for every age and every class. The profits, of course, were commensurate. Arithmetic has never been so severely taxed as in the computation of Scott's productions, and the proceeds resulting from them. In one year he received (or, more properly, was credited with—for it is somewhat doubtful how much he actually

received) £15,000 for his novels, comprehending the first edition and the copyright. The discovery of this rich mine furnished its fortunate proprietor with the means of gratifying the fondest, and indeed most chimerical, desires. He had always coveted the situation of a lord of acres—a Scottish laird; where his passion for planting might find scope in the creation of whole forests—for everything with him was on a magnificent scale—and where he might indulge the kindly feelings of his nature in his benevolent offices to a numerous and dependent tenantry. The few acres of the original purchase now swelled into hundreds, and, for aught we know, thousands; for one tract alone we find incidentally noticed as costing £30,000. "It rounds off the property so handsomely," he says in one of his letters. There was always a corner to "round off." The mansion, in the mean time, from a simple cottage *orné*, was amplified into the dimensions almost, as well as the *bizarre* proportions, of some old feudal castle. The furniture and decorations were of the costliest kind; the wainscots of oak and cedar, the floors tessellated with marbles, or woods of different dyes, the ceilings fretted and carved with all the delicate tracery of a Gothic abbey, the storied windows blazoned with the richly colored insignia of heraldry, the walls garnished with time-honored trophies, or curious specimens of art, or volumes sumptuously bound—in short, with all that luxury could demand or ingenuity devise; while a copious reservoir of gas supplied every corner of the mansion with such fountains of light as must have puzzled the genius of the *lamp* to provide for the less fortunate Aladdin.

Scott's exchequer must have been seriously taxed in another form by the crowds of visitors whom he entertained under his hospitable roof. There was scarcely a person of note, or indeed not of note, who visited that country without paying his respects to the Lion of Scotland. Lockhart reckons up a full sixth of the British peerage who had been there within his recollection; and Captain Hall, in his amusing "Notes," remarks that it was not unusual for a dozen or more coach-loads to find their way into his grounds in the course of the day, most of whom found or forced an entrance into the mansion. Such was the heavy tax paid by his celebrity, and, we may add, his good nature. For, if the one had been a whit less than the other, he could never have tolerated such a nuisance.

The cost of his correspondence gives one no light idea of the demands made on his time, as well as purse, in another form. His postage for letters, independently of franks, by which a large portion of it was covered, amounted to a hundred and fifty pounds, it seems, in the course of the year. In this, indeed, should be included ten pounds for a pair of unfortunate "Cherokee Lovers," sent all the way from our own happy land, in order to be godfathered by Sir Walter on the London boards. Perhaps the smart-money he had to pay on this interesting occasion had its influence in mixing up rather more acid than was natural to him in his judgments of our countrymen. At all events the Yankees find little favor on the few occasions on which he has glanced at them in his correspondence. "I am not at all surprised," he says, in a letter to Miss Edgeworth, apparently chiming in with her own tune—"I am not at all surprised at what you say of the Yankees. They are a people possessed of very considerable energy, quickened and brought into eager action by an honorable love of their country, and pride in their institutions; but they are as yet rude in their ideas of social intercourse, and totally ignorant, speaking generally, of all the art of good-breeding, which consists chiefly in a postponement of one's own petty wishes or comforts to those of others. By rude questions and observations, an absolute disrespect to other people's feelings, and a ready indulgence of their own, they make one feverish in their company, though perhaps you may be ashamed to confess the reason. But this will wear off, and is already wearing away. Men when they have once got benches will soon fall into the use of cushions. They are advancing in the lists of our literature, and they will not be long deficient in the *petite morale*, especially as they have, like ourselves, the rage for travelling." On another occasion he does, indeed, admit having met with in the course of his life "four or five well-lettered Americans ardent in pursuit of knowledge, and free from the ignorance and forward presumption which distinguish many of their countrymen." This seems hard measure; but perhaps we should find it difficult among the many who have visited this country to recollect as great a number of Englishmen—and Scotchmen to boot—entitled to a higher degree of commendation. It can hardly be that the well-informed and well-bred men of both countries make a point of staying at

home; so we suppose we must look for the solution of the matter in the existence of some disagreeable ingredient, common to the characters of both nations, sprouting as they do from a common stock, which remains latent at home, and is never fully disclosed till they get into a foreign climate. But as this problem seems pregnant with philosophical, physiological, and, for aught we know, psychological matter, we have not courage for it here, but recommend the solution to Miss Martineau, to whom it will afford a very good title for a new chapter in her next edition. The strictures we have quoted, however, to speak more seriously, are worth attending to, coming as they do from a shrewd observer, and one whose judgments, though here somewhat colored, no doubt, by political prejudice, are in the main distinguished by a sound and liberal philanthropy. But, were he ten times an enemy, we would say, "*Eas est ab hoste doceri.*"

With the splendid picture of the baronial residence at Abbotsford Mr. Lockhart closes all that at this present writing we have received of his delightful work in this country. And in the last sentence the melancholy sound of "the muffled drum" gives ominous warning of what we are to expect in the sixth and concluding volume. In the dearth of more authentic information, we will piece out our sketch with a few facts gleaned from the somewhat meagre bill of fare—meagre by comparison with the rich banquet of the true Amphitryon—afforded by the "Recollections" of Mr. Robert Pierce Gillies.

The unbounded popularity of the Waverley novels led to still more extravagant anticipations on the part both of the publishers and author. Some hints of a falling off, though but slightly, in the public favor, were unheeded by both parties; though, to say truth, the exact state of things was never disclosed to Scott, it being Ballantyne's notion that it would prove a damper, and that the true course was "to press on more sail as the wind lulled." In these sanguine calculations not only enormous sums, or, to speak correctly, bills, were given for what had been written, but the author's drafts, to the amount of many thousand pounds, were accepted by Constable in favor of works, the very embryos of which lay not only unformed but unimagined, in the womb of time. In return for this singular accommodation, Scott was induced to indorse the drafts of his publisher;

and in this way an amount of liabilities was incurred which, considering the character of the house, and its transactions, it is altogether inexplicable that a person in the independent position of Sir Walter Scott should have subjected himself to for a moment. He seems to have had entire confidence in the stability of the firm; a confidence to which it seems, from Mr. Gillies's account, not to have been entitled from the first moment of his connection with it. The great reputation of the house, however, the success and magnitude of some of its transactions, especially the publication of these novels, gave it a large credit, which enabled it to go forward with a great show of prosperity in ordinary times, and veiled the tottering state of things probably from Constable's own eyes. It is but the tale of yesterday. The case of Constable & Co. is, unhappily, a very familiar one to us. But, when the hurricane of 1825 came on, it swept away all those buildings that were not founded on a rock; and those of Messrs. Constable, among others, soon became literally mere castles in the air. In plain English, the firm stopped payment. The assets were very trifling in comparison with the debts. And Sir Walter Scott was found on their paper to the frightful amount of one hundred thousand pounds.

His conduct on the occasion was precisely what was to have been anticipated from one who had declared on a similar though much less appalling conjuncture, "I am always ready to make any sacrifices to do justice to my engagements, and would rather sell anything or everything than be less than a true man to the world." He put up his house and furniture in town at auction; delivered over his personal effects at Abbotsford, his plate, books, furniture, etc., to be held in trust for his creditors (the estate itself had been recently secured to his son, on occasion of his marriage), and bound himself to discharge a certain amount annually of the liabilities of the insolvent firm. He then, with his characteristic energy, set about the performance of his Herculean task. He took lodgings in a third-rate house in St. David's Street; saw but little company; abridged the hours usually devoted to his meals and his family; gave up his ordinary exercise; and, in short, adopted the severe habits of a regular Grub Street stipendiary.

"For many years," he said to Mr. Gillies, "I have been accustomed to hard work, because I found it a pleasure; now,



with all due respect for Falstaff's principle, 'nothing on compulsion,' I certainly will not shrink from work because it has become necessary."

One of his first tasks was his "Life of Bonaparte," achieved in the space of thirteen months. For this he received fourteen thousand pounds, about eleven hundred per month; not a bad bargain, either, as it proved, for the publishers. The first two volumes of the nine which make up the English edition were a *rifacimento* of what he had before compiled for the "Annual Register." With every allowance for the inaccuracies and the excessive expansion incident to such a flashing rapidity of execution, the work, taking into view the broad range of its topics, its shrewd and sagacious reflections, and the free, bold, and picturesque coloring of its narration—and, above all, considering the brief time in which it was written—is indisputably one of the most remarkable monuments of genius and industry—perhaps the most remarkable ever recorded.

Scott's celebrity made everything that fell from him, however trifling—the dew-drops from the lion's mane—of value. But none of the many adventures he embarked in, or rather set afloat, proved so profitable as the republication of his novels, with his notes and illustrations. As he felt his own strength in the increasing success of his labors, he appears to have relaxed somewhat from them, and to have again resumed somewhat of his ancient habits, and in a mitigated degree his ancient hospitality. But still his exertions were too severe, and pressed heavily on the springs of health, already deprived by age of their former elasticity and vigor. At length, in 1831, he was overtaken by one of those terrible shocks of paralysis which seem to have been constitutional in his family, but which, with more precaution and under happier auspices, might doubtless have been postponed if not wholly averted. At this time he had, in the short space of little more than five years, by his sacrifices and efforts, discharged about two-thirds of the debt for which he was responsible; an astounding result, wholly unparalleled in the history of letters! There is something inexpressibly painful in this spectacle of a generous heart thus courageously contending with fortune, bearing up against the tide with unconquerable spirit, and finally overwhelmed by it just within reach of shore.

The rest of his story is one of humiliation and sorrow. He was induced to make a voyage to the Continent, to try the effect of a more genial climate. Under the sunny sky of Italy he seemed to gather new strength for a while. But his eye fell with indifference on the venerable monuments which in better days would have kindled all his enthusiasm. The invalid sighed for his own home at Abbotsford. The heat of the weather and the fatigue of rapid travel brought on another shock which reduced him to a state of deplorable imbecility. In this condition he returned to his own halls, where the sight of early friends and of the beautiful scenery—the creation, as it were, of his own hands—seemed to impart a gleam of melancholy satisfaction, which soon, however, sunk into insensibility. To his present situation might well be applied the exquisite verses which he indited on another melancholy occasion:

“ Yet not the landscape to mine eye  
Bears those bright hues that once it bore;  
Though evening, with her richest dye,  
Flames o’er the hills of Ettrick’s shore.

“ With listless look along the plain  
I see Tweed’s silver current glide,  
And coldly mark the holy fane  
Of Melrose rise in ruined pride.

“ The quiet lake, the balmy air,  
The hill, the stream, the tower, the tree—  
Are they still such as once they were,  
Or is the dreary change in me?”

Providence in its mercy did not suffer the shattered frame long to outlive the glorious spirit which had informed it. He breathed his last on September 21, 1832. His remains were deposited, as he had always desired, in the hoary abbey of Dryburgh; and the pilgrim from many a distant clime shall repair to the consecrated spot so long as the reverence for exalted genius and worth shall survive in the human heart.

This sketch, brief as we could make it, of the literary history of Sir Walter Scott, has extended so far as to leave but little space for—what Lockhart’s volumes afford ample materials for—his personal character. Take it for all and all, it is not too much to say that this character is probably the most remarkable

on record. There is no man that we now recall of historical celebrity who combined in so eminent a degree the highest qualities of the moral, the intellectual, and the physical. He united in his own character what hitherto had been found incompatible. Though a poet and living in an ideal world, he was an exact, methodical man of business; though achieving with the most wonderful fertility of genius, he was patient and laborious; a mousing antiquarian, yet with the most active interest in the present and whatever was going on around him; with a strong turn for a roving life and military adventure, he was yet chained to his desk more hours at some periods of his life than a monkish recluse; a man with a heart as capacious as his head; a Tory, brim full of Jacobitism, yet full of sympathy and unaffected familiarity with all classes, even the humblest; a successful author, without pedantry and without conceit; one, indeed, at the head of the republic of letters, and yet with a lower estimate of letters, as compared with other intellectual pursuits, than was ever hazarded before.

The first quality of his character, or rather that which forms the basis of it, as of all great characters, was his energy. We see it in his early youth triumphing over the impediments of nature, and in spite of lameness making him conspicuous in every sort of athletic exercise—clambering up dizzy precipices, wading through treacherous fords, and performing feats of pedestrianism that make one's joints ache to read of. As he advanced in life we see the same force of purpose turned to higher objects. A striking example occurs in his organization of the journals and the publishing-house in opposition to Constable. In what Herculean drudgery did not this latter business, in which he undertook to supply matter for the nimble press of Ballantyne, involve him! While, in addition to his own concerns, he had to drag along by his solitary momentum a score of heavier undertakings, that led Lockhart to compare him to a steam-engine with a train of coal-wagons hitched on to it. "Yes," said Scott, laughing, and making a crashing cut with his axe (for they were felling larches), "and there was a cursed lot of dung-carts, too."

We see the same powerful energies triumphing over disease at a later period, when, indeed, nothing but a resolution to get the better of it enabled him to do so. "Be assured," he re-

marked to Mr. Gillies, "that if pain could have prevented my application to literary labor not a page of 'Ivanhoe' would have been written. Now, if I had given way to mere feelings and ceased to work, it is a question whether the disorder might not have taken a deeper root and become incurable." But the most extraordinary instance of this trait is the readiness with which he assumed, and the spirit with which he carried through till his mental strength broke down under it, the gigantic task imposed on him by the failure of Constable.

It mattered little, indeed, what the nature of the task was, whether it were organizing an opposition to a political faction, or a troop of cavalry to resist invasion, or a medley of wild Highlanders and Edinburgh cockneys to make up a royal puppet-show—a loyal celebration—for "his Most Sacred Majesty"—he was the master-spirit that gave the cue to the whole *dramatis personæ*. This potent impulse showed itself in the thoroughness with which he prescribed not merely the general orders but the execution of the minutest details in his own person. Thus all around him was the creation, as it were, of his individual exertion. His lands waved with forests planted with his own hands, and in process of time cleared by his own hands. He did not lay the stones in mortar exactly for his whimsical castle, but he seems to have superintended the operation from the foundation to the battlements. The antique relics, the curious works of art, the hangings and furniture even with which his halls were decorated, were specially contrived or selected by him; and, to read his letters at this time to his friend Terry, one might fancy himself perusing the correspondence of an upholsterer, so exact and technical is he in his instructions. We say this not in disparagement of his great qualities. It is only the more extraordinary, for, while he stooped to such trifles, he was equally thorough in matters of the highest moment. It was a trait of character.

Another quality which, like the last, seems to have given the tone to his character, was his social or benevolent feelings. His heart was an unfailing fountain which, not merely the distresses, but the joys, of his fellow-creatures made to flow like water. In early life, and possibly sometimes in later, high spirits and a vigorous constitution led him occasionally to carry his social propensities into convivial excess. But he never was in dan-

ger of the habitual excess to which a vulgar mind—and sometimes, alas! one more finely tuned—abandons itself. Indeed, with all his conviviality, it was not the sensual relish, but the social, which acted on him. He was neither *gourmet* nor *gourmand*; but his social meetings were endeared to him by the free interchange of kindly feelings with his friends. La Bruyère says (and it is odd he should have found it out in Louis XIV's court), "The heart has more to do than the head with the pleasures, or rather promoting the pleasures, of society" ("*Un homme est d'un meilleur commerce dans la société par le cœur que par l'esprit*"). If report, the report of travellers, be true, we Americans, at least the New Englanders, are too much perplexed with the cares and crosses of life to afford many genuine specimens of this *bonhomie*. However this may be, we all, doubtless, know some such character, whose shining face, the index of a cordial heart radiant with beneficent pleasure, diffuses its own exhilarating glow wherever it appears. Rarely, indeed, is this precious quality found united with the most exalted intellect. Whether it be that Nature, chary of her gifts, does not care to shower too many of them on one head; or, that the public admiration has led the man of intellect to set too high a value on himself, or at least his own pursuits, to take an interest in the inferior concerns of others; or, that the fear of compromising his dignity puts him "on points" with those who approach him; or, whether, in truth, the very magnitude of his own reputation throws a freezing shadow over us little people in his neighborhood; whatever be the cause, it is too true that the highest powers of mind are very often deficient in the only one which can make the rest of much worth in society—the power of pleasing.

Scott was not one of these little great. His was not one of those dark-lantern visages which concentrate all their light on their own path and are black as midnight to all about them. He had a ready sympathy, a word of contagious kindness or cordial greeting for all. His manners, too, were of a kind to dispel the icy reserve and awe which his great name was calculated to inspire. His frank address was a sort of *open sesame* to every heart. He did not deal in sneers, the poisoned weapons which come not from the head, as the man who launches them is apt to think, but from an acid heart, or perhaps an acid

stomach, a very common laboratory of such small artillery. Neither did Scott amuse the company with parliamentary harangues or metaphysical disquisitions. His conversation was of the narrative kind, not formal, but as casually suggested by some passing circumstance or topic, and thrown in by way of illustration. He did not repeat himself, however, but continued to give his anecdotes such variations, by rigging them out in a new "cocked hat and walking-cane," as he called it, that they never tired like the the thrice-told tale of a chronic *raconteur*. He allowed others, too, to take their turn, and thought with the Dean of St. Patrick's:

"Carve to all but just enough,  
Let them neither starve nor stuff;  
And that you may have your due,  
Let your neighbors carve for you."

He relished a good joke, from whatever quarter it came, and was not over-dainty in his manner of testifying his satisfaction. "In the full tide of mirth he did indeed laugh the heart's laugh," says Mr. Adolphus. "Give me an honest laughter," said Scott himself, on another occasion, when a buckram man of fashion had been paying him a visit at Abbotsford. His manners, free from affectation or artifice of any sort, exhibited the spontaneous movements of a kind disposition, subject to those rules of good-breeding which Nature herself might have dictated. In this way he answered his own purposes admirably, as a painter of character, by putting every man in good humor with himself; in the same manner as a cunning portrait-painter amuses his sitters with such store of fun and anecdote as may throw them off their guard, and call out the happiest expressions of their countenances.

Scott, in his wide range of friends and companions, does not seem to have been over-fastidious. In the instance of John Ballantyne it has exposed him to some censure. Indeed, a more worthless fellow never hung on the skirts of a great man; for he did not take the trouble to throw a decent veil over the grossest excesses. But then he had been the schoolboy friend of Scott; had grown up with him in a sort of dependence—a relation which begets a kindly feeling in the party that confers the benefits at least. How strong it was in him may be inferred

from his remark at his funeral. "I feel," said Scott, mournfully, as the solemnity was concluded—"I feel as if there would be less sunshine for me from this day forth." It must be admitted, however, that his intimacy with little Rigdumfunnidos, whatever apology it may find in Scott's heart, was not very creditable to his taste.

But the benevolent principle showed itself not merely in words, but in the more substantial form of actions. How many are the cases recorded of indigent merit which he drew from obscurity, and almost warmed into life by his own generous and most delicate patronage. Such were the cases, among others, of Leyden, Weber, Hogg. How often and how cheerfully did he supply such literary contributions as were solicited by his friends—and they taxed him pretty liberally—amid all the pressure of business, and at the height of his fame when his hours were golden hours indeed to him! In the more vulgar and easier forms of charity he did not stint his hand, though, instead of direct assistance, he preferred to enable others to assist themselves; in this way fortifying their good habits, and relieving them from the sense of personal degradation.

But the place where his benevolent impulses found their proper theatre for expansion was his own home; surrounded by a happy family, and dispensing all the hospitalities of a great feudal proprietor. "There are many good things in life," he says, in one of his letters, "whatever satirists and misanthropes may say to the contrary, but probably the best of all, next to a conscience void of offence (without which, by the by, they can hardly exist), are the quiet exercise and enjoyment of the social feelings in which we are at once happy ourselves and the cause of happiness to them who are dearest to us." Every page of the work almost shows us how intimately he blended himself with the pleasures and the pursuits of his own family, watched over the education of his children, shared in their rides, their rambles, and sports, losing no opportunity of kindling in their young minds a love of virtue and honorable principles of action. He delighted, too, to collect his tenantry around him, multiplying holidays, when young and old might come together under his roof-tree, when the jolly punch was liberally dispensed by himself and his wife among the elder people, and the Hogmanay cakes and pennies were distributed among the young

ones; while his own children mingled in the endless reels and hornpipes on the earthen floor, and the laird himself, mixing in the groups of merry faces, had his "private joke for every old wife or 'gausie carle,' his arch compliment for the ear of every bonnie lass, and his hand and his blessing for the head of every little Eppie Daidle from Abbotstown or Broomylees." "Sir Walter," said one of his old retainers, "speaks to every man as if he were his blood-relation." No wonder that they should have returned this feeling with something warmer than blood-relations usually do. Mr. Gillies tells an anecdote of the "Ettrick Shepherd," showing how deep a root such feelings, notwithstanding his rather odd way of expressing them, sometimes had taken in his honest nature. "Mr. James Ballantyne walking home with him one evening from Scott's, where, by the by, Hogg had gone uninvited, happened to observe: 'I do not at all like this illness of Scott's. I have often seen him look jaded of late, and am afraid it is serious.' 'Haud your tongue, or I'll gar you measure your length on the pavement!' replied Hogg. 'You fause, down-hearted loon, that you are; ye daur to speak as if Scott were on his deathbed! It can not be, it must not be! I will not suffer you to speak that gait.' The sentiment was like that of Uncle Toby at the bedside of Le Fevre; and, at these words, the Shepherd's voice became suppressed with emotion."

But Scott's sympathies were not confined to his species; and, if he treated them like blood-relations, he treated his brute followers like personal friends. Everyone remembers old Maida, and faithful Camp, the "dear old friend," whose loss cost him a dinner. Mr. Gillies tells us that he went into his study on one occasion, when he was winding off his "Vision of Don Roderick." "'Look here,' said the poet, 'I have just begun to copy over the rhymes that you heard to-day, and applauded so much. Return to supper, if you can; only don't be late, as you perceive we keep early hours, and Wallace will not suffer me to rest after six in the morning. Come, good dog, and help the poet.' At this hint, Wallace seated himself upright on a chair next his master, who offered him a newspaper, which he directly seized, looking very wise, and holding it firmly and contentedly in his mouth. Scott looked at him with great satisfaction, for he was excessively fond of dogs. 'Very well,' said



he, 'now we shall get on.' And so I left them abruptly, knowing that my 'absence would be the best company.' This fellowship, indeed, extended much further than to his canine followers, of which, including hounds, terriers, mastiffs, and mongrels, he had certainly a goodly assortment. We find, also, Grimalkin installed in a responsible post in the library, and out of doors pet hens, pet donkeys, and—tell it not in Judea—a pet pig!

Scott's sensibilities, though easily moved, and widely diffused, were warm and sincere. None shared more cordially in the troubles of his friends; but on all such occasions, with a true manly feeling, he thought less of mere sympathy than of the most effectual way for mitigating their sorrows. After a touching allusion, in one of his epistles, to his dear friend Erskine's death, he concludes: "I must turn to, and see what can be done about getting some pension for his daughters." In another passage, which may remind one of some of the exquisite touches in Jeremy Taylor, he indulges in the following beautiful strain of philosophy: "The last three or four years have swept away more than half the friends with whom I lived in habits of great intimacy. So it must be with us:

" 'When a life's day draws near the gloamin'—

and yet we proceed with our plantations and plans as if any tree but the sad cypress would accompany us to the grave, where our friends have gone before us. It is the way of the world, however, and must be so; otherwise life would be spent in un-availing mourning for those whom we have lost. It is better to enjoy the society of those who remain to us." His well-disciplined heart seems to have confessed the influence of this philosophy, in his most ordinary relations. "I can't help it," was a favorite maxim of his, "and therefore will not think about it; for that at least I *can* help."

Among his admirable qualities must not be omitted a certain worldly sagacity or shrewdness, which is expressed as strongly as any individual trait can be, in some of his portraits, especially in the excellent one of him by Leslie. Indeed, his countenance would seem to exhibit, ordinarily, much more of Dandie Dinmont's benevolent shrewdness than of the eye glancing from earth to heaven, which in fancy we assign to the poet, and which,

in some moods, must have been his. This trait may be readily discerned in all his business transactions, which he managed with perfect knowledge of character, as well as of his own rights. No one knew better than he the market value of an article; and, though he underrated his literary wares, as to their mere literary rank, he set as high a money value on them, and made as sharp a bargain, as any of the trade could have done. In his business concerns, indeed, he managed rather too much; or, to speak more correctly, was too fond of mixing up mystery in his transactions, which, like most mysteries, proved of little service to their author. Scott's correspondence, especially with his son, affords obvious examples of shrewdness, in the advice he gives as to his deportment in the novel situations and society into which the young cornet was thrown. Occasionally, indeed, in the cautious hints about etiquette and social observances, we are reminded of that ancient "*arbiter elegantiarum*," Lord Chesterfield; though, it must be confessed, there is throughout a high moral tone, which the noble lord did not very scrupulously affect.

Another feature in Scott's character was his loyalty; which, indeed, some people would extend into a more general deference to rank not royal. We do, indeed, meet with a tone of deference occasionally to the privileged orders (or rather privileged persons, as the King, his own chief, etc., for to the mass of stars and garters he showed no such respect), which falls rather unpleasantly on the ear of a republican. But, independently of the feelings which should rightfully have belonged to him as the subject of a monarchy, and without which he must have been a false-hearted subject, his own were heightened by a poetical coloring, that mingled in his mind even with much more vulgar relations of life. At the opening of the regalia in Holyrood House, when the honest burgomaster deposited the crown on the head of one of the young ladies present, the good man probably saw nothing more in the dingy diadem than we should have seen—a head-piece for a set of men no better than himself, and, if the old adage of a "dead lion" holds true, not quite so good. But to Scott's imagination other views were unfolded. "A thousand years their cloudy wings expanded" around him, and, in the dim visions of distant times, he beheld the venerable line of monarchs who had swayed the counsels of his country

in peace, and led her armies in battle. The "golden round" became in his eye the symbol of his nation's glory; and, as he heaved a heavy oath from his heart, he left the room in agitation, from which he did not speedily recover. There was not a spice of affectation in this—for who ever accused Scott of affectation?—but there was a good deal of poetry, the poetry of sentiment.

We have said that this feeling mingled in the more common concerns of his life. His cranium, indeed, to judge from his busts, must have exhibited a strong development of the organ of veneration. He regarded with reverence everything connected with antiquity. His establishment was on the feudal scale; his house was fashioned more after the feudal ages than his own; and even in the ultimate distribution of his fortune, although the circumstance of having made it himself relieved him from any legal necessity of contravening the suggestions of natural justice, he showed such attachment to the old aristocratic usage as to settle nearly the whole of it on his eldest son.

The influence of this poetic sentiment is discernible in his most trifling acts, in his tastes, his love of the arts, his social habits. His museum, house, and grounds were adorned with relics, curious not so much from their workmanship as their historic associations. It was the ancient fountain from Edinburgh, the Tolbooth lintels, the blunderbuss and spleughan of Rob Roy, the drinking-cup of Prince Charlie, or the like. It was the same in the arts. The tunes he loved were not the refined and complex melodies of Italy, but the simple notes of his native minstrelsy, from the bagpipe of John of Skye, or from the harp of his own lovely and accomplished daughter. So also in painting. It was not the masterly designs of the great Flemish and Italian schools that adorned his walls, but some portrait of Claverhouse, or of Queen Mary, or of "glorious old John." In architecture, we see the same spirit in the singular "romance of stone and lime," which may be said to have been his own device, down to the minutest details of its finishing. We see it again in the joyous celebrations of his feudal tenantry, the good old festivals, the Hogmanay, the Kirn, etc., long fallen into desuetude, when the old Highland piper sounded the same wild pibroch that had so often summoned the clans together, for war

or for wassail, among the fastnesses of the mountains. To the same source, in fine, may be traced the feelings of superstition which seemed to hover round Scott's mind like some "strange, mysterious dream," giving a romantic coloring to his conversation and his writings, but rarely if ever influencing his actions. It was a poetic sentiment.

Scott was a Tory to the backbone. Had he come into the world half a century sooner he would, no doubt, have made a figure under the banner of the Pretender. He was at no great pains to disguise his political creed; witness his jolly drinking-song on the acquittal of Lord Melville. This was verse; but his prose is not much more qualified. "As for Whiggery in general," he says, in one of his letters, "I can only say that, as no man can be said to be utterly overset until his rump has been higher than his head, so I cannot read in history of any free State which has been brought to slavery until the rascal and uninstructed populace had had their short hour of anarchical government, which naturally leads to the stern repose of military despotism. . . . With these convictions, I am very jealous of Whiggery, under all modifications; and I must say my acquaintance with the total want of principle in some of its warmest professors does not tend to recommend it." With all this, however, his Toryism was not, practically, of that sort which blunts a man's sensibilities for those who are not of the same porcelain clay with himself. No man, Whig or Radical, ever had less of this pretension, or treated his inferiors with greater kindness, and indeed familiarity; a circumstance noticed by every visitor at his hospitable mansion, who saw him strolling round his grounds, taking his pinch of snuff out of the mull of some "gray-haired old hedger," or leaning on honest Tom Purdie's shoulder, and taking sweet counsel as to the right method of thinning a plantation. But, with all this familiarity, no man was better served by his domestics. It was the service of love; the only service that power cannot command, and money cannot buy.

Akin to the feelings of which we have been speaking was the truly chivalrous sense of honor which stamped his whole conduct. We do not mean that Hotspur honor which is roused only by the drum and fife—though he says of himself, "I like the sound of a drum as well as Uncle Toby ever did"—but that

honor which is deep-seated in the heart of every true gentleman, shrinking with sensitive delicacy from the least stain or imputation of a stain on his faith. "If we lose everything else," writes he on a trying occasion to a friend who was not so nice in this particular, "we will at least keep our honor unblemished." It reminds one of the pithy epistle of a kindred chivalrous spirit, Francis I, to his mother from the unlucky field of Pavia: "*Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur.*" Scott's latter years furnished a noble commentary on the sincerity of his manly principles.

Little is said directly of his religious sentiments in the biography. They seem to have harmonized well with his political. He was a member of the English Church, a staunch champion of established forms, and a sturdy enemy to everything that savored of the sharp twang of Puritanism. On this ground, indeed, the youthful Samson used to wrestle manfully with worthy Dominie Mitchell, who, no doubt, furnished many a screed of doctrine for the Rev. Peter Poundtext, Master Nehemiah Holdenough, and other lights of the Covenant. Scott was no friend to cant under any form. But, whatever were his speculative opinions, in practice his heart overflowed with that charity which is the life-spring of our religion. And, whenever he takes occasion to allude to the subject directly, he testifies a deep reverence for the truths of revelation as well as for its divine Original.

Whatever estimate be formed of Scott's moral qualities, his intellectual were of a kind which well entitled him to the epithet conferred on Lope de Vega, "*monstruo de naturaleza,*" "a miracle of nature." His mind, indeed, did not seem to be subjected to the same laws which control the rest of his species. His memory, as is usual, was the first of his powers fully developed. While an urchin at school he could repeat whole cantos, he says, of Ossian and of Spenser. In riper years we are constantly meeting with similar feats of his achievement. Thus on one occasion he repeated the whole of a poem in some penny magazine incidentally alluded to, which he had not seen since he was a schoolboy. On another, when the Ettrick Shepherd was trying ineffectually to fish up from his own recollections some scraps of a ballad he had himself manufactured years before, Scott called to him, "Take your pencil, Jemmy, and I

will tell it to you word for word"; and he accordingly did so. But it is needless to multiply examples of feats so startling as to look almost like the tricks of a conjurer.

What is most extraordinary is, that while he acquired with such facility that the bare perusal or the repetition of a thing once to him was sufficient, he yet retained it with the greatest pertinacity. Other men's memories are so much jostled in the rough and tumble of life that most of the facts get sifted out nearly as fast as they are put in; so that we are in the same pickle with those unlucky daughters of Danaus, of schoolboy memory, obliged to spend the greater part of the time in replenishing. But Scott's memory seemed to be hermetically sealed, suffering nothing once fairly in to leak out again. This was of immense service to him when he took up the business of authorship, as his whole multifarious stock of facts, whether from books or observation, became in truth his stock in trade, ready furnished to his hands. This may explain in part, though it is not less marvellous, the cause of his rapid execution of works, often replete with rare and curious information. The labor, the preparation, had been already completed. His whole life had been a business of preparation. When he ventured, as in the case of "Rokeby" and of "Quentin Durward," on ground with which he had not been familiar, we see how industriously he set about new acquisitions.

In most of the prodigies of memory which we have ever known the overgrowth of that faculty seems to have been attained at the expense of all the others. But in Scott the directly opposite power of the imagination—the inventive power—was equally strongly developed, and at the same early age. For we find him renowned for story-craft while at school. How many a delightful fiction, indeed, warm with the flush of ingenuous youth, did he not throw away on the ears of thoughtless childhood which, had they been duly registered, might now have amused children of a larger growth! We have seen Scott's genius in its prime and its decay. The frolic graces of childhood are alone wanting.

The facility with which he threw his ideas into language was also remarked very early. One of his first ballads, and a long one, was dashed off at the dinner-table. His "Lay" was written at the rate of a canto a week. "Waverley," or rather the

last two volumes of it, cost the evenings of a summer month. Who that has ever read the account can forget the movements of that mysterious hand as descried by the two students from the window of a neighboring attic, throwing off sheet after sheet with untiring rapidity of the pages destined to immortality? Scott speaks pleasantly enough of this marvellous facility in a letter to his friend Morritt: "When once I set my pen to the paper it will walk fast enough. I am sometimes tempted to leave it alone, and see whether it will not write as well without the assistance of my head as with it. A hopeful prospect for the reader."

As to the time and place of composition, he appears to have been nearly indifferent. He possessed entire power of abstraction, and it mattered little whether he were nailed to his clerk's desk, under the drowsy eloquence of some long-winded barrister, or dashing his horse into the surf on Portobello sands, or rattling in a post-chaise, or amid the hum of guests in his overflowing halls at Abbotsford—it mattered not, the same well-adjusted little packet, "nicely corded and sealed," was sure to be ready at the regular time for the Edinburgh mail. His own account of his composition, to a friend who asked when he found time for it, is striking enough. "Oh," said Scott, "I lie simmering over things for an hour or so before I get up—and there's the time I am dressing to overhaul my half-sleeping half-waking *projet de chapitre*—and when I get the paper before me it commonly runs off pretty easily. Besides, I often take a doze in the plantations, and, while Tom marks out a dike or a drain, as I have directed, one's fancy may be running its ain riggs in some other world." Never, indeed, did this sort of simmering produce such a splendid bill of fare.

The quality of the material under such circumstances is, in truth, the great miracle of the whole. The execution of so much work as a mere feat of penmanship would undoubtedly be very extraordinary; but, as a mere scrivener's miracle, would be hardly worth recording. It is a sort of miracle that is every day performing under our own eyes, as it were, by Messrs. James, Bulwer & Co., who, in all the various staples of "comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral," etc., etc., supply their own market and ours too with all that can be wanted. In Spain and in Italy, too, we may find abun-

dance of *improvisatori* and *improvisatrici*, who perform miracles of the same sort in verse, too, in languages whose vowel terminations make it very easy for the thoughts to tumble into rhyme without any malice prepense. Governor Raffles, in his account of Java, tells us of a splendid avenue of trees before his house, which in the course of a year shot up to the height of forty feet. But who shall compare the brief, transitory splendors of a fungous vegetation with the mighty monarch of the forest, sending his roots deep into the heart of the earth, and his branches, amid storm and sunshine, to the heavens? And is not the latter the true emblem of Scott? For who can doubt that his prose creations, at least, will gather strength with time, living on through succeeding generations, even when the language in which they are written, like those of Greece and Rome, shall cease to be a living language?

The only writer deserving in these respects to be named with Scott is Lope de Vega, who in his own day held as high a rank in the republic of letters as our great contemporary. The beautiful dramas which he threw off for the entertainment of the capital, and whose success drove Cervantes from the stage, outstripped the abilities of an amanuensis to copy. His intimate friend Montalvan, one of the most popular and prolific authors of the time, tells us that he undertook with Lope once to supply the theatre with a comedy—in verse, and in three acts, as the Spanish dramas usually were—at a very short notice. In order to get through his half as soon as his partner, he rose by two in the morning, and at eleven had completed it; an extraordinary feat, certainly, since a play extended to between thirty and forty pages, of a hundred lines each. Walking into the garden he found his brother poet pruning an orange-tree. "Well, how do you get on?" said Montalvan. "Very well," answered Lope. "I rose betimes, at five; and, after I had got through, ate my breakfast; since which I have written a letter of fifty triplets, and watered the whole of the garden, which has tired me a good deal."

But a little arithmetic will best show the comparative fertility of Scott and Lope de Vega. It is so germane to the present matter that we shall make no apology for transcribing here some computations from a former article; and, as few of our readers, we suspect, have the air-tight memory of Sir Walter, we doubt



not that enough of it has escaped them by this time to excuse us from equipping it with one of those "cocked hats and walking-sticks" with which he furbished up an old story:

"It is impossible to state the results of Lope de Vega's labors in any form that will not powerfully strike the imagination. Thus, he has left twenty-one million three hundred thousand verses in print, besides a mass of manuscript. He furnished the theatre, according to the statement of his intimate friend Montalvan, with eighteen hundred regular plays and four hundred *autos* or religious dramas—all acted. He composed, according to his own statement, more than one hundred comedies in the almost incredible space of twenty-four hours each; and a comedy averaged between two and three thousand verses, great part of them rhymed and interspersed with sonnets, and other more difficult forms of versification. He lived seventy-two years; and supposing him to have employed fifty of that period in composition, although he filled a variety of engrossing vocations during that time, he must have averaged a play a week, to say nothing of twenty-one volumes, quarto, of miscellaneous works, including five epics, written in his leisure moments, and all now in print!

"The only achievements we can recall in literary history bearing any resemblance to, though falling far short of this, are those of our illustrious contemporary, Sir Walter Scott. The complete edition of his works, recently advertised by Murray, with the addition of two volumes, of which Murray has not the copyright, probably contains ninety volumes, small octavo. [To these should further be added a large supply of matter for the 'Edinburgh Annual Register,' as well as other anonymous contributions.] Of these, forty-eight volumes of novels and twenty-one of history and biography were produced between 1814 and 1831, or in seventeen years. These would give an average of four volumes a year, or one for every three months during the whole of that period, to which must be added twenty-one volumes of poetry and prose previously published. The mere mechanical execution of so much work, both in his case and Lope de Vega's, would seem to be scarce possible in the limits assigned. Scott, too, was as variously occupied in other ways as his Spanish rival; and probably, from the social hospitality of his life, spent a much larger portion of his time in no literary occupation at all."

Of all the wonderful dramatic creations of Lope de Vega's genius what now remains? Two or three plays only keep possession of the stage, and few, very few, are still read with pleasure in the closet. They have never been collected into a uniform edition, and are now met with in scattered sheets only on the shelves of some mousing bookseller, or collected in miscellaneous parcels in the libraries of the curious.

Scott, with all his facility of execution, had none of that pitiable affectation sometimes found in men of genius, who think that the possession of this quality may dispense with regular, methodical habits of study. He was most economical of time.

He did not, like Voltaire, speak of it as "a terrible thing that so much time should be wasted in talking." He was too little of a pedant and far too benevolent not to feel that there are other objects worth living for than mere literary fame. But he grudged the waste of time on merely frivolous and heartless objects. "As for dressing when we are quite alone," he remarked one day to Mr. Gillies, whom he had taken home with him to a family dinner, "it is out of the question. Life is not long enough for such fiddle-faddle." In the early part of his life he worked late at night. But subsequently from a conviction of the superior healthiness of early rising, as well as the desire to secure, at all hazards, a portion of the day for literary labor, he rose at five the year round; no small effort, as anyone will admit who has seen the pain and difficulty which a regular bird of night finds in reconciling his eyes to daylight. He was scrupulously exact, moreover, in the distribution of his hours. In one of his letters to his friend Terry, the player, replete, as usual, with advice that seems to flow equally from the head and the heart, he says, in reference to the practice of dawdling away one's time: "A habit of the mind it is which is very apt to beset men of intellect and talent, especially when their time is not regularly filled up, but left to their own arrangement. But it is like the ivy round the oak, and ends by limiting, if it does not destroy, the power of manly and necessary exertion. I must love a man so well to whom I offer such a word of advice that I will not apologize for it, but expect to hear you are become as regular as a Dutch clock—hours, quarters, minutes, all marked and appropriated." With the same emphasis he inculcates the like habits on his son. If any man might dispense with them it was surely Scott. But he knew that without them the greatest powers of mind will run to waste and water but the desert.

Some of the literary opinions of Scott are singular, considering, too, the position he occupied in the world of letters. "I promise you," he says in an epistle to an old friend, "my oaks will outlast my laurels; and I pique myself more on my compositions for manure than on any other compositions to which I was ever accessory." This may seem *badinage*. But he repeatedly, both in writing and conversation, places literature, as a profession, below other intellectual professions, and especially

the military. The Duke of Wellington, the representative of the last, seems to have drawn from him a very extraordinary degree of deference, which, we cannot but think, smacks a little of that strong relish for gunpowder which he avows in himself.

It is not very easy to see on what this low estimate of literature rested. As a profession, it has too little in common with more active ones to afford much ground for running a parallel. The soldier has to do with externals; and his contests and triumphs are over matter, in its various forms, whether of man or material nature. The poet deals with the bodiless forms of air, of fancy lighter than air. His business is contemplative; the other's is active, and depends for its success on strong moral energy and presence of mind. He must, indeed, have genius of the highest order to effect his own combinations, anticipate the movements of his enemy, and dart with eagle eye on his vulnerable point. But who shall say that this practical genius, if we may so term it, is to rank higher in the scale than the creative power of the poet, the spark from the mind of Divinity itself?

The orator might seem to afford better ground for comparison, since, though his theatre of action is abroad, he may be said to work with much the same tools as the writer. Yet, how much of his success depends on qualities other than intellectual! "Action," said the father of eloquence, "action, action, are the three most essential things to an orator." How much, indeed, depends on the look, the gesture, the magical tones of voice, modulated to the passions he has stirred; and how much on the contagious sympathies of the audience itself, which drown everything like criticism in the overwhelming tide of emotion! If anyone would know how much, let him, after patiently standing

"till his feet throb,  
And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath  
Of patriots bursting with heroic rage,"

read the same speech in the columns of a morning newspaper, or in the well-concocted report of the orator himself. The productions of the writer are subjected to a fiercer ordeal. He has no excited sympathies of numbers to hurry his readers along over his blunders. He is scanned in the calm silence of the closet. Every flower of fancy seems here to wilt under the rude

breath of criticism; every link in the chain of argument is subjected to the touch of prying scrutiny, and if there be the least flaw in it it is sure to be detected. There is no tribunal so stern as the secret tribunal of a man's own closet, far removed from all the sympathetic impulses of humanity. Surely there is no form in which intellect can be exhibited to the world so completely stripped of all adventitious aids as the form of written composition. But, says the practical man, let us estimate things by their utility. "You talk of the poems of Homer," said a mathematician, "but after all what do they prove?" A question which involves an answer somewhat too voluminous for the tail of an article. But, if the poems of Homer were, as Heeren asserts, the principal bond which held the Grecian States together, and gave them a national feeling, they "prove" more than all the arithmeticians of Greece—and there were many cunning ones in it—ever did. The results of military skill are indeed obvious. The soldier by a single victory enlarges the limits of an empire; he may do more—he may achieve the liberties of a nation, or roll back the tide of barbarism ready to overwhelm them. Wellington was placed in such a position, and nobly did he do his work—or, rather, he was placed at the head of such a gigantic moral and physical apparatus as enabled him to do it. With his own unassisted strength of course he could have done nothing. But it is on his own solitary resources that the great writer is to rely. And yet who shall say that the triumphs of Wellington have been greater than those of Scott—whose works are familiar as household words to every fireside in his own land, from the castle to the cottage; have crossed oceans and deserts, and, with healing on their wings, found their way to the remotest regions; have helped to form the character, until his own mind may be said to be incorporated into those of hundreds of thousands of his fellow-men? Who is there that has not, at some time or other, felt the heaviness of his heart lightened, his pains mitigated, and his bright moments of life made still brighter by the magical touches of his genius? And shall we speak of his victories as less real, less serviceable to humanity, less truly glorious, than those of the greatest captain of his day? The triumphs of the warrior are bounded by the narrow theatre of his own age. But those of a Scott or a Shakespeare will be renewed, with greater and greater

lustre, in ages yet unborn, when the victorious chieftain shall be forgotten, or shall live only in the song of the minstrel and the page of the chronicler.

But, after all, this sort of parallel is not very gracious nor very philosophical; and, to say truth, is somewhat foolish. We have been drawn into it by the not random, but very deliberate, and in our poor judgment very disparaging estimate by Scott of his own vocation; and, as we have taken the trouble to write it, our readers will excuse us from blotting it out. There is too little ground for the respective parties to stand on for a parallel. As to the pedantic *cui bono* standard, it is impossible to tell the final issues of a single act; how can we then hope to, those of a course of action? As for the honor of different vocations, there never was a truer sentence than the stale one of Pope—stale now because it is so true—

“Act well your part, there all the honor lies.”

And it is the just boast of our own country that in no civilized nation is the force of this philanthropic maxim so nobly illustrated as in ours—thanks to our glorious institutions.

A great cause, probably, of Scott's low estimate of letters was the facility with which he wrote himself. What costs us little we are apt to prize little. If diamonds were as common as pebbles, and gold dust as any other, who would stoop to gather them? It was the prostitution of his muse, by the by, for this same gold dust which brought a sharp rebuke on the poet from Lord Byron, in his “English Bards”—

“For this we spurn Apollo's venal son”;

a coarse cut, and the imputation about as true as most satire—that is, not true at all. This was indited in his Lordship's earlier days, when he most chivalrously disclaimed all purpose of bartering his rhymes for gold. He lived long enough, however, to weigh his literary wares in as nice a money-balance as any more vulgar manufacturer ever did. And, in truth, it would be ridiculous if the produce of the brain should not bring its price, in this form as well as any other; there is little danger, we imagine, of finding too much gold in the bowels of Parnassus.

Scott took a more sensible view of things. In a letter to

Ellis, written soon after the publication of the "Minstrelsy," he observes: "People may say this and that of the pleasure of fame, or of profit, as a motive of writing; I think the only pleasure is in the actual exertion and research, and I would no more write upon any other terms than I would hunt merely to dine upon hare-soup. At the same time, if credit and profit came unlooked for I would no more quarrel with them than with the soup." Even this declaration was somewhat more magnanimous than was warranted by his subsequent conduct. The truth is, he soon found out, especially after the Waverley vein had opened, that he had hit on a gold mine. The prodigious returns he got gave the whole thing the aspect of a speculation. Every new work was an adventure; and the proceeds naturally suggested the indulgence of the most extravagant schemes of expense, which, in their turn, stimulated him to fresh efforts. In this way the "profits" became, whatever they might have been once, a principal incentive to, as they were the recompense of, exertion. His productions were cash articles, and were estimated by him more on the Hudibrastic rule of "the real worth of a thing" than by any fanciful standard of fame. He bowed with deference to the judgment of the booksellers, and trimmed his sails dexterously as the "*aura popularis*" shifted. "If it is na weil bobbet," he writes to his printer, on turning out a less lucky novel, "we'll bobb it again." His muse was of that school who seek the greatest happiness of the greatest possible number. We can hardly imagine him invoking her, like Milton—

"Still govern thou my song,  
Urania, and fit audience find, though few."

Still less can we imagine him, like the blind old bard, feeding his soul with visions of posthumous glory, and spinning out epics for five pounds apiece.

It is singular that Scott, although he set as high a money value on his productions as the most enthusiastic of the "trade" could have done, in a literary view, should have held them so cheap. "Whatever others may be," he said, "I have never been a partisan of my own poetry; as John Wilkes declared that, 'in the height of his success, he had himself never been a Wilkite.'" Considering the poet's popularity, this was but an indifferent compliment to the taste of his age. With all this dis-

paragement of his own productions, however, Scott was not insensible to criticism. He says somewhere, indeed, that "if he had been conscious of a single vulnerable point in himself, he would not have taken up the business of writing." But on another occasion he writes, "I make it a rule never to read the attacks made upon me." And Captain Hall remarks: "He never reads the criticisms on his books; this I know, from the most unquestionable authority. Praise, he says, gives him no pleasure, and censure annoys him." Madame de Graffigny says, also, of Voltaire, that "he was altogether indifferent to praise, but the least word from his enemies drove him crazy." Yet both these authors banqueted on the sweets of panegyric as much as any who ever lived. They were in the condition of an epicure, whose palate has lost its relish for the dainty fare in which it has been so long revelling, without becoming less sensible to the annoyances of sharper and coarser flavors. It may afford some consolation to humble mediocrity, to the less fortunate votaries of the muse, that those who have reached the summit of Parnassus are not much more contented with their condition than those who are scrambling among the bushes at the bottom of the mountain. The fact seems to be, as Scott himself intimates more than once, that the joy is in the chase, whether in the prose or the poetry of life.

But it is high time to terminate our lucubrations, which, however imperfect and unsatisfactory, have already run to a length that must trespass on the patience of the reader. We rise from the perusal of these delightful volumes with the same sort of melancholy feeling with which we awake from a pleasant dream. The concluding volume, of which such ominous presage is given in the last sentence of the fifth, has not yet reached us; but we know enough to anticipate the sad catastrophe it is to unfold of the drama. In those which we have seen, however, we have beheld a succession of interesting characters come upon the scene—and pass away to their long home. "Bright eyes now closed in dust, gay voices forever silenced," seem to haunt us, too, as we write. The imagination reverts to Abbotsford—the romantic and once brilliant Abbotsford—the magical creation of his hands. We see its halls, radiant with the hospitality of his benevolent heart, thronged with pilgrims from every land, assembled to pay homage at the shrine of genius, echoing to the

blithe music of those festal holidays when young and old met to renew the usages of the good old times.

“These were its charms—but all these charms are fled.”

Its courts are desolate, or trodden only by the foot of the stranger. The stranger sits under the shadows of the trees which his hand planted. The spell of the enchanter is dissolved. His wand is broken. And the mighty minstrel himself now sleeps in the bosom of the peaceful scenes, embellished by his taste and which his genius has made immortal.





THE LAST MOMENTS OF EMINENT  
MEN

—

BY

GEORGE BANCROFT

## GEORGE BANCROFT

1800—1891

George Bancroft was born at Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1800, and was graduated from Harvard at the age of seventeen. With his graduation, however, his education was only begun. During the next five years he travelled extensively in Europe, and studied zealously at the Universities of Göttingen, Berlin, and Heidelberg, and at Paris, meeting many eminent scholars of the time whose friendship he enjoyed through life. His studies were chiefly devoted to the languages and to history. On his return he taught for a year in Harvard College, and later he held an appointment in a seminary in Massachusetts. About this time he had some thought of entering public life, and was elected to the legislature, but at the age of thirty-five he decided to devote his life to writing a history of his country.

The first volume of his history appeared in 1834. Four years later Bancroft was appointed Collector for the Port of Boston, but nothing was permitted to interfere seriously with the great work he had undertaken. In 1844 he was an unsuccessful candidate for Governor of Massachusetts, and in 1845 became Secretary of the Navy under President Polk. As a member of Polk's Cabinet he established the Naval Academy at Annapolis. The following year he was appointed Minister to Great Britain, remaining abroad three years. These duties interrupted only temporarily the progress of his great history. The third volume appeared in 1840; twelve years later Bancroft completed the fourth and fifth volumes. The remaining volumes appeared in steady succession at intervals of from two to four years down to 1874, when the tenth and last was published. The work, which had thus taken no less than forty years to complete, covered the history of the colonial and revolutionary periods only. In the preparation of this great work Bancroft ransacked every great public library in the country, besides examining newspaper files, documents, and local and family records innumerable. His high public position gave him ready access to numerous archives, both public and private, that would have been sealed to an investigator less known and respected. During his later years Bancroft wrote a "History of the Formation of the Constitution of the United States" in two volumes, which may be regarded as a continuation of his greater work. He died at Washington in 1891.

Bancroft's literary style, while lacking the brilliancy of Prescott's or Motley's, and the perfection of form of Parkman's, possesses none the less high merit of its own. It is clear and forcible, thoroughly dignified and convincing. That his works have not achieved a wider popularity is due more to their voluminousness than to any defect in the style of their composition. The essay on "The Last Moments of Eminent Men" shows Bancroft in one of his best moods. He wrote very little except on historical subjects; in fact it was his sole aim to write a worthy history of his country, and his later years were spent in revising what he had already written rather than in attempting new work. Bancroft's one great work is his "History," a lofty and enduring monument.

## THE LAST MOMENTS OF EMINENT MEN

“**L**IFE,” says Sir William Temple, “is like wine; he who would drink it pure must not drain it to the dregs.” “I do not wish,” Byron would say, “to live to become old.” The expression of the ancient poet, “that to die young is a boon of Heaven to its favorites,” was repeatedly quoted by him with approbation. The certainty of a speedy release he would call the only relief against burdens which could not be borne were they not of very limited duration.

But the general sentiment of mankind declares length of days to be desirable. After an active and successful career the repose of decline is serene and cheerful. By common consent gray hairs are a crown of glory; the only object of respect that can never excite envy. The hour of evening is not necessarily overcast; and the aged man, exchanging the pursuits of ambition for the quiet of observation, the strife of public discussion for the diffuse but instructive language of experience, passes to the grave amid grateful recollections and the tranquil enjoyment of satisfied desires.

The happy, it is agreed by all, are afraid to contemplate their end; the unhappy, it has been said, look forward to it as a release from suffering. “I think of death often,” said a distinguished but dissatisfied man; “and I view it as a refuge. There is something calm and soothing to me in the thought; and the only time that I feel repugnance to it is on a fine day, in solitude, in a beautiful country, when all nature seems rejoicing in light and life.”

This is the language of self-delusion. Numerous as may be the causes for disgust with life, its close is never contemplated with carelessness. Religion may elevate the soul to a sublime reliance on a future existence; nothing else can do it. The

love of honor may brave danger; the passion of melancholy may indulge an aversion to continued being; philosophy may take its last rest with composure; the sense of shame may conduct to fortitude; yet they who would disregard the grave must turn their thoughts from the consideration of its terrors. It is an impulse of nature to strive to preserve our being; and the longing cannot be eradicated. The mind may shun the contemplation of horrors; it may fortify itself by refusing to observe the nearness or the extent of the impending evil; but the instinct of life is stubborn; and he who looks directly at its termination and professes indifference is a hypocrite or is self-deceived. He that calls boldly upon Death is sure to be dismayed on finding him near. The oldest are never so old, but they desire life for one day longer; the child looks to its parents as if to discern a glimpse of hope; even the infant, as it exhales its breath, springs from its pillow to meet its mother as if there were help where there is love.

There is a story told of one of the favorite marshals of Napoleon, who, in a battle in the south of Germany, was struck by a cannon-ball, and so severely wounded that there was no possibility of a respite. Summoning the surgeon, he ordered his wounds to be dressed; and, when aid was declared to be unavailing, the dying officer clamorously demanded that Napoleon should be sent for, as one who had power to stop the effusion of blood, and awe nature itself into submission. Life expired amid maledictions and threats heaped upon the innocent surgeon. This foolish frenzy may have appeared like blasphemy; it was but the uncontrolled outbreak of the instinct of self-preservation, in a rough and undisciplined mind.

Even in men of strong religious convictions the end is not always met with serenity; and the preacher and philosopher sometimes express an apprehension which cannot be pacified. The celebrated British moralist, Samuel Johnson, was the instructor of his age; his works are full of the austere lessons of reflecting wisdom. It might have been supposed that religion would have reconciled him to the decree of Providence; that philosophy would have taught him to acquiesce in a necessary issue; that science would have inspired him with confidence in the skill of his medical attendants. And yet it was not so. A sullen gloom overclouded his faculties; he could not sum-

mon resolution to tranquillize his emotions; and, in the absence of his attendants, he gashed himself with ghastly and debilitating wounds, as if the blind lacerations of his misguided arm could prolong the moments of an existence which the best physicians of London declared to be numbered.

"Is there anything on earth I can do for you?" said Taylor to Wolcott, known as Peter Pindar, as he lay on his death-bed. "Give me back my youth," were the last words of the satirical buffoon.

If Johnson could hope for relief from self-inflicted wounds, if the poet could prefer to his friend the useless prayer for a restoration of youth, we may readily believe what historians relate to us of the end of Louis XI of France, a monarch who was not destitute of eminent qualities as well as repulsive vices; possessing courage, a knowledge of men and of business, an indomitable will, a disposition favorable to the administration of justice among his subjects; viewing impunity in wrong as exclusively a royal prerogative. Remorse, fear, a consciousness of being detected, disgust with life and horror of death—these were the sentiments which troubled the sick-couch of the absolute king. The first of his line who bore the epithet of "the most Christian," he was so abandoned to egotism that he allowed the veins of children to be opened, and greedily drank their blood; believing, with physicians of that day, that it would renovate his youth, or at least check the decay of nature. The cruelty was useless. At last, feeling the approach of death to be certain, he sent for an anchorite from Calabria, since revered as St. Francis de Paula; and, when the hermit arrived, the monarch of France entreated him to spare his life. He threw himself at the feet of the man who was believed to derive healing virtues from the sanctity of his character; he begged the intercession of his prayers; he wept, he supplicated, he hoped that the voice of a Calabrian monk would reverse the order of nature, and successfully plead for his respite.

We find the love of life still more strongly acknowledged by an English poet, who, after describing our being as the dream of a shadow, "a weak-built isthmus between two eternities, so frail that it can sustain neither wind nor wave," yet avows his preference of a few days', nay, of a few hours' longer residence upon earth, to all the fame which poetry can achieve.

by panic and desert his own residence in a more favored clime, should it be invaded by epidemic disease. He who would fearlessly meet the worst forms of a storm at sea, and take his chance of escaping the fever as he passed through New Orleans, would shun New York in the season of the cholera, and shrink from any danger which was novel and unexpected. The widows of India ascend the funeral-pile with a fortitude which man could never display, and emulously yield up their lives to a barbarous usage which, if men had been called upon to endure it, would never have been perpetuated. Yet is it to be supposed that these unhappy victims are indifferent to the charms of existence, or blind to the terrors of its extinction? Calmly as they may lay themselves upon the pyre, they would beg for mercy were their execution to be demanded in any other way; they would confess their fear were it not that love and honor and custom confirm their doom.

No class of men in the regular discharge of duty incur danger more frequently than the honest physician. There is no type of malignant maladies with which he fails to become acquainted, no hospital so crowded with contagion that he dares not walk freely through its wards. His vocation is among the sick and the dying; he is the familiar friend of those who are sinking under infectious disease; and he never shrinks from the horror of observing it under all its aspects. He must do so with equanimity; as he inhales the poisoned atmosphere he must coolly reflect on the medicines which may mitigate the sufferings that he cannot remedy. Nay, after death has ensued, he must search with the dissecting-knife for its hidden cause, if so by multiplying his own perils he may discover some alleviation for the afflictions of others. And why is this? Because the physician is indifferent to death? Because he is steeled and hardened against the fear of it? Because he despises or pretends to despise it? By no means. It is his especial business to value life, to cherish the least spark of animated existence. And the habit of caring for the lives of his fellow-men is far from leading him to an habitual indifference to his own. The physician shuns every danger but such as the glory of his profession commands him to defy.

Thus we are led to explain the anomaly of suicide, and reconcile the apparent contradiction of a terror of death, which is yet

voluntarily encountered. It may seem a paradox; but the dread of dying has itself sometimes prompted suicide, and the man who seeks to destroy himself at the very moment of perpetrating his crime betrays the passion for life. Menace him with death under a different form from that which he has chosen, and, like other men, he will get out of its way. He will defend himself against the assassin, though he might be ready to cut his own throat; he will, if at sea, and the ship were sinking in a storm, labor with his whole strength to save it from going down, even if he had formed the design to leap into the ocean in the first moment of a calm. Place him in the van of an army, it is by no means certain that he will not prove a coward; tell him the cholera is about to rage, and he will deluge himself with preventive remedies; send him to a house visited with yellow fever, and he will steep himself in vinegar and carry with him an atmosphere of camphor. It is only under the one form, which the mind in some insane excitement may have chosen, that he preserves the desire to leave the world.

It will not be difficult, then, to set a right value on the declaration of those who profess to regard death not with indifference merely, but with contempt. It is pure affectation, or the indulgence of a vulgar levity; and must excite either compassion or disgust, according as it is marked by the spirit of fiendish scoffing or of human vanity and self-deception. A French moralist tells us of a valet who danced merrily on the scaffold, where he was to be broken on the wheel. A New England woman, belonging to a family which esteemed itself one of the first, was convicted of aiding her paramour to kill her husband. She was a complete sensualist, one to whom life was everything, and the loss of it the total shipwreck of everything. On her way to the place of execution she was accompanied by a clergyman of no very great ability; and all along the road, with the gallows in plain sight, she amused herself in teasing the good man, whose wits were no match for her raillery. He had been buying a new chaise, quite an event in the life of a humble country pastor, and when he spoke of the next world she would amuse herself in praising his purchase. If he deplored her fate and her prospects, she would grieve at his exposure to the inclement weather, and laughed and chatted as if she had been driving to a wedding and not to her own funeral. And why was



this? Because death was not feared? No; but because death was feared, and feared intensely. The Eastern women, who are burned alive with their deceased husbands, often utter shrieks that would pierce the hearers to the soul; and, to prevent a compassion which would endanger the reign of superstition, the priests, with drums and cymbals, drown the terrific cries of their victims. So it is with those who go to the court of the King of Terrors with merriment on their lips. They dread his presence, and they seek to drown the noise of his approaching footsteps by the sound of their own ribaldry. If the scaffold often rings with a jest, it is because the mind shrinks from the solemnity of the impending change.

Perhaps the most common device for averting contemplation from death itself is, in directing it to the manner of dying. *Vanitas vanitatum!* Vanity does not give up its hold on the last hour. Men wish to die with distinction, to be buried in state; and the last thoughts are employed on the decorum of the moment, or in the anticipation of funeral splendors. It was no uncommon thing among the Romans for a rich man to appoint an heir on condition that his obsequies should be celebrated with costly pomp. "When I am dead," said an Indian chief, who fell into his last sleep at Washington—"when I am dead let the big guns be fired over me." The words were thought worthy of being engraved on his tomb; but they are no more than a plain expression of a very common passion; the same which leads the humblest to desire that at least a stone may be placed at the head of his grave, and demands the erection of splendid mausoleums and costly tombs for the mistaken men—

"Who by the proofs of death pretend to live."

Among the ancients, an opulent man, while yet in health, would order his own sarcophagus; and nowadays the wealthy sometimes build their own tombs, for the sake of securing a satisfactory monument. A vain man, who had done this at a great expense, showed his motive so plainly that his neighbors laughed with the sexton of the parish, who wished that the builder might not be kept long out of the interest of his money.

But it is not merely in the decorations of the grave that vanity

is displayed. Saladin, in his last illness, instead of his usual standard, ordered his shroud to be uplifted in front of his tent; and the herald, who hung out this winding-sheet as a flag, was commanded to exclaim aloud: "Behold! this is all which Saladin, the vanquisher of the East, carries away of all his conquests." He was wrong there. He came naked into the world, and he left it naked. Grave-clothes were a superfluous luxury, and, to the person receiving them, as barren of comfort as his sceptre or his scimitar. Saladin was vain. He sought in dying to contrast the power he had enjoyed with the feebleness of his condition; to pass from the world in a striking antithesis; to make his death-scene an epigram. All was vanity.

A century ago it was the fashion for culprits to appear on the scaffold in the dress of dandies. Some centuries before it was the privilege of noblemen, if they merited hanging, to escape the gallows and perish on the block. The Syrian priests had foretold to the Emperor Heliogabalus that he would be reduced to the necessity of committing suicide; believing them true prophets, he kept in readiness silken cords and a sword of gold. Admirable privilege of the nobility, to be beheaded instead of hanged! Envious prerogative of imperial dignity, to be strangled with a knot of silk or to be assassinated with a golden sword!

" 'Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke'  
(Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke).  
'No, let a charming chintz and Brussels lace  
Wrap my cold limbs and shade my lifeless face;  
One would not sure be frightful when one's dead,  
And—Betty—give this cheek a little red.' "

The example chosen by the poet extended to appearances after death; for the presence of the same weakness in the hour of mortality we must look to the precincts of courts, where folly used to reign by prescriptive right; where caprice gives law and pleasures consume life. There you may witness the harlot's euthanasia. The French court was at Choisy when Madame de Pompadour felt the pangs of a fatal malady. It had been the established etiquette that none but princes and persons of royal blood should breathe their last in Versailles. Proclaim to the gay circles of Paris that a thing new and unheard-of is to be permitted! Announce to the world that the rules of palace

propriety and Bourbon decorum are to be broken! that the chambers where vice had fearlessly lived and laughed, but never been permitted to expire, were to admit the novel spectacle of the King's favorite mistress struggling with death!

The marchioness questioned the physicians firmly; she perceived their hesitation; she saw the hand that beckoned her away; and she determined, says the historian, to depart in the pomp of a queen. Louis XV, himself not capable of a strong emotion, was yet willing to concede to his dying friend the consolation which she coveted, the opportunity to reign till her parting gasp. The courtiers thronged round the death-bed of a woman who distributed favors with the last exhalations of her breath; and the King hurried to name to public offices the persons whom her faltering accents recommended. Her sick-room became a scene of state; the princes and grandees still entered to pay their homage to the woman whose power did not yield to mortal disease, and were surprised to find her richly attired. The traces of death in her countenance were concealed by rouge. She reclined on a splendid couch; questions of public policy were discussed by ministers in her presence; she gloried in holding to the end the reins of the kingdom in her hands. Even a sycophant clergy showed respect to the expiring favorite, and felt no shame at sanctioning with their frequent visits the vices of a woman who had entered the palace only as an adulteress. Having complied with the rites of the Roman Church, she next sought the approbation of the philosophers. She lisped no word of penitence; she shed no tears of regret. The curate left her as she was in the agony. "Wait a moment," said she; "we will leave the house together."

The dying mistress was worshipped while she breathed; hardly was she dead when the scene changed: two domestics carried out her body on a hand-barrow from the palace to her private home. The King stood at the window looking at the clouds as her remains were carried by. "The marchioness," said he, "will have bad weather on her journey."

The flickering lamp blazes with unusual brightness just as it goes out. "The fit gives vigor, as it destroys." He who has but a moment remaining is released from the common motives for dissimulation; and Time, that lays his hand on everything else, destroying beauty, undermining health, and wasting the

powers of life, spares the ruling passion, which is corrected with the soul itself. That passion

“ . . . sticks to our last sand.  
Consistent in our follies and our sins,  
Here honest Nature ends as she begins.”

Napoleon expired during the raging of a whirlwind, and his last words showed that his thoughts were in the battle-field. The meritorious author of the “Memoir of Cabot,” a work which in accuracy and in extensive research is very far superior to most late treatises on maritime discovery, tells us that the discoverer of our continent, in an hallucination before his death, believed himself again on the ocean, once more steering in quest of adventure over waves which knew him as the steed knows its rider. How many a gentle eye has been dimmed with tears as it read the fabled fate of Fergus MacIvor! Not inferior to the admirable hero of the romance was the Marquis of Montrose, who had fought for the Stuarts and fell into the hands of the Presbyterians. His head and his limbs were ordered to be severed from his body, and to be hanged on the Tolbooth in Edinburgh and in other public towns of the kingdom. He listened to the sentence with the pride of loyalty and the fierce anger of a generous defiance. “I wish,” he exclaimed, “I had flesh enough to be sent to every city in Christendom, as a testimony to the cause for which I suffer.”

But let us take an example of sublimer virtue, such as we find in a statesman who lived without a stain from youth to maturity, and displayed an unwavering consistency to the last; a hero in civil life, who was in some degree our own. It becomes America to take part in rescuing from undeserved censure the names and the memory of victims to the unconquerable love of republican liberty.

“Vane, young in years, in counsel old: to know  
Both spiritual power and civil, what each means,  
What severs each, thou’st learned, which few have done.  
The bounds of either sword to thee we owe;  
Therefore on thy firm hand Religion leans  
In peace, and reckons thee her eldest son.”

He that would discern the difference between magnanimous genius and a shallow wit may compare this splendid eulogy of

Milton with the superficial levity in the commentary of Warton. It is a fashion to call Sir Henry Vane a fanatic. And what is fanaticism? True, he was a rigid Calvinist. True, he has written an obscure book on the mystery of godliness, of which all that we understand is excellent, and we may therefore infer that the vein of the rest is good. But does this prove him a fanatic? If to be the uncompromising defender of civil and religious liberty be fanaticism; if to forgive injuries be fanaticism; if to believe that the mercy of God extends to all his creatures, and may reach even the angels of darkness, be fanaticism; if to have earnestly supported in the Long Parliament the freedom of conscience; if to have repeatedly, boldly, and zealously interposed to check the persecution of Roman Catholics; if to have labored that the sect which he least approved should enjoy their property in security and be safe from all penal enactments for nonconformity; if in his public life to have pursued a career of firm, conscientious, disinterested consistency, never wavering, never trimming, never changing—if all this be fanaticism, then was Sir Harry Vane a fanatic. Not otherwise. The people of Massachusetts declined to continue him in office; and when his power in England was great, he requited the colony with the benefits of his favoring influence. He resisted the arbitrariness of Charles I, but would not sit as one of his judges. He opposed the tyranny of Cromwell. When that extraordinary man entered the House of Commons to break up the Parliament which was about to pass laws that would have endangered his supremacy, Vane rebuked him for his purpose of treason. When the musketeers invaded the hall of debate, and others were silent, Vane exclaimed to the most despotic man in Europe: "This is not honest. It is against morality and common honesty." Well might Cromwell, since his designs were criminal, reply: "Sir Henry Vane! Sir Henry Vane! The Lord deliver me from Sir Henry Vane!"

Though Vane suffered from the usurpation of the Protector, he lived to see the Restoration. On the return of the Stuarts, like Lafayette among the Bourbons, he remained the stanch enemy of tyranny. The austere patriot whom Cromwell had feared struck terror into the hearts of a faithless and licentious court. It was resolved to destroy him. In a different age or country the poisoned cup, or the knife of the assassin, might

have been used; in that season of corrupt influence a judicial murder was resolved upon. His death was a deliberate crime, contrary to the royal promise; contrary to the express vote of "the healing Parliament"; contrary to law, to equity, to the evidence. But it suited the designs of a monarch who feared to be watched by a statesman of incorruptible elevation of character. The night before his execution he enjoyed the society of his family as if he had been reposing in his own mansion. The next morning he was beheaded. The least concession would have saved him. If he had only consented to deny the supremacy of Parliament the King would have restrained the malignity of his hatred. "Ten thousand deaths for me," exclaimed Vane, "ere I will stain the purity of my conscience." Historians report that life was dear to him; he submitted to his end with the firmness of a patriot, the serenity of a Christian.

"'I give and I devise' (old Euclio said,  
And sighed) 'my lands and tenements to Ned.'  
'Your money, sir?' 'My money, sir! what, all?'  
'Why, if I must' (then wept), 'I give it Paul.'  
'The manor, sir?' 'The manor! hold,' he cried,  
'Not that—I can not part with that'—and died."

Lorenzo de' Medici, upon his death-bed, sent for Savonarola to receive his confession and grant him absolution. The severe anchorite questioned the dying sinner with unsparing rigor. "Do you believe entirely in the mercy of God?" "Yes, I feel it in my heart." "Are you truly ready to restore all the possessions and estates which you have unjustly acquired?" The dying duke hesitated; he counted up in his mind the sums which he had hoarded; delusion whispered that nearly all had been so honestly gained that the sternest censor would strike but little from his opulence. The pains of hell were threatened if he denied, and he gathered courage to reply that he was ready to make restitution. Once more the unyielding priest resumed his inquisition. "Will you resign the sovereignty of Florence, and restore the democracy of the republic?" Lorenzo, like Macbeth, had acquired a crown; but, unlike Macbeth, he saw sons of his own about to become his successors. He gloried in the hope of being the father of princes, the founder of a line of hereditary sovereigns. Should he crush this brilliant expectation and tremble at the wild words of a visionary? Should

he who had reigned as a monarch stoop to die as a merchant? No! though hell itself were opening beneath his bed. "Not that! I cannot part with that." Savonarola left his bedside with indignation, and Lorenzo died without shrift.

"And you, brave Cobham, to the latest breath,  
Shall feel your ruling passion strong in death,  
Such in those moments, as in all the past—  
'Oh, save my country, Heaven!' shall be your last."

Like this was the exclamation of the patriot Quincy, whose virtues have been fitly commemorated by the pious reverence of his son. The celebrated Admiral Blake breathed his last as he came in sight of England, happy in at least desecrating the land of which he had advanced the glory by his brilliant victories. Quincy died as he approached the coast of Massachusetts. He loved his family; but at that moment he gave his whole soul to the cause of freedom. "Oh, that I might live"—it was his dying wish—"to render to my country one last service!"

The coward falls panic-stricken; the superstitious man dies with visions of terror floating before his fancy. It has even happened that a man has been in such dread of eternal woe as to cut his throat in his despair. The phenomenon seems strange; but the fact is unquestionable. The giddy that are near a precipice, totter toward the brink which they would shun. Everybody remembers the atheism and bald sensuality of the septuagenarian Alexander VI; and the name of his natural son, Cæsar Borgia, is a proverb, as a synonym for the most vicious selfishness. Let one tale, of which Macchiavelli attests the truth, set forth the deep baseness of a cowardly nature. Borgia had, by the most solemn oaths, induced the Duke of Gravina, Oliverotto, Vitellozzo Vitelli, and another, to meet him in Sinigaglia, for the purpose of forming a treaty, and then issued the order for the massacre of Oliverotto and Vitelli. Can it be believed? Vitelli, as he expired, begged of the infamous Borgia, his assassin, to obtain of Alexander a dispensation for his omissions, a release from purgatory.

The death-bed of Cromwell himself was not free from superstition. When near his end, he asked if the elect could never fall. "Never," replied Godwin the preacher. "Then I am

safe," said the man whose last years had been stained by cruelty and tyranny; "for I am sure I was once in a state of grace."

Ximenes languished from disappointment at the loss of power and the want of royal favor. A smile from Louis would have cheered the death-bed of Racine.

In a brave mind the love of honor endures to the last. "Don't give up the ship!" cried Lawrence, as his life-blood was flowing in torrents. Abimelech groaned that he fell ignobly by the hand of a woman. We have ever admired the gallant death of Sir Richard Grenville, who, in a single ship, encountered a numerous fleet; and, when mortally wounded, husbanded his strength till he could summon his victors to bear testimony to his courage and his patriotism. "Here die I, Richard Grenville, with a joyous and quiet mind, for that I have ended my life as a true soldier ought to do, fighting for his country, queen, religion, and honor."

The public has been instructed through the press in the details of the treason of Benedict Arnold, by an inquirer, who has compassed earth and sea in search of historic truth, and has merited the applause of his country, not less for candor and judgment, than for diligence and ability. The victim of the intrigue was André. The mind of the young soldier revolted at the service of treachery in which he had become involved, and, holding a stain upon honor to be worse than the forfeiture of life, he shuddered at the sight of the gallows, but not at the thought of dying. He felt the same sentiment which made death welcome to Nelson and to Wolfe, to whom it came with glory and victory for its companions; but for André the keen sense of honor added bitterness to the cup of affliction by exciting fear lest the world should take the manner of his execution as evidence of merited opprobrium.

Finally: he who has a good conscience and a well-balanced mind meets death with calmness, resignation, and hope. Saint Louis died among the ruins of Carthage—a Christian king, laboring in vain to expel the religion of Mohammed from the spot where Dido had planted the gods of Syria. "My friends," said he, "I have finished my course. Do not mourn for me. It is natural that I, as your chief and leader, should go before you. You must follow me. Keep yourselves in readiness for the journey." Then, giving his son his blessing and the best



advice, he received the sacrament, closed his eyes, and died as he was repeating from the Psalms: "I will come into thy house; I will worship in thy holy temple."

The curate of St. Sulpice asked the confessor who had shrived Montesquieu on his death-bed if the penitent had given satisfaction. "Yes," replied Father Roust, "like a man of genius." The curate was displeased; unwilling to leave the dying man a moment of tranquillity, he addressed him, "Sir, are you truly conscious of the greatness of God?" "Yes," said the departing philosopher, "and of the littleness of man."

How calm were the last moments of Cuvier! Benevolence of feeling and self-possession diffused serenity round the hour of his passing away. Confident that the hand of death was upon him, he yet submitted to the application of remedies, that he might gratify his more hopeful friends. They had recourse to leeches; and with delightful simplicity the great naturalist observed, it was he who had discovered that leeches possess red blood. The discovery, which he made in his youth, had been communicated to the public in the memoir that first gained him celebrity. The thoughts of the dying naturalist recurred to the scenes of his early life, to the coast of Normandy, where, in the solitude of conscious genius, he had roamed by the side of the ocean, and achieved fame by observing the wonders of animal life which are nourished in its depths. He remembered his years of poverty, the sullen rejection which his first claims for advancement had received, and all the vicissitudes through which he had been led to the highest distinctions in science. The son of the Würtemberg soldier, of too feeble a frame to embrace the profession of his father, had found his way to the secrets of nature. The man who, in his own province, had been refused the means of becoming the village pastor of an ignorant peasantry, had succeeded in charming the most polished circles of Paris by the clearness of his descriptions, and commanding the attention of the deputies of France by the grace and fluency of his elocution. And now he was calmly predicting his departure; his respiration became rapid, and his head fell as if he were in meditation. Thus his soul passed to its Creator without a struggle. "Those who entered afterward would have thought that the noble old man, seated in his arm-chair by the fireplace, was asleep, and would have walked softly

across the room for fear of disturbing him." Heaven had but "recalled its own."

The death of Haller himself was equally tranquil. When its hour approached, he watched the ebbing of life and continued to observe the beating of his pulse till sensation was gone.

A tranquil death becomes the man of science, or the scholar. He should cultivate letters to the last moment of life; he should resign public honors as calmly as one would take off a domino on returning from a mask. He should listen to the signal for his departure, not with exultation, and not with indifference. Respecting the dread solemnity of the change, and reposing in hope on the bosom of death, he should pass without boldness and without fear, from the struggles of inquiry to the certainty of knowledge, from a world of doubt to a world of truth.



COMPENSATION

—

BY

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

## RALPH WALDO EMERSON

1803—1882

Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was born in Boston in 1803, was descended from a family of ministers, "eight generations of culture," as Holmes once expressed it. He was educated at the Boston Latin School and at Harvard, where he graduated in 1821 without attracting much attention at the time. He then taught school for a while, studied divinity and became a minister himself in turn, preaching to the congregation of the Second Unitarian Church of Boston with great acceptance. In 1832, however, he resigned because he felt unable to agree with his congregation on an important point of doctrine. The next year he went abroad, meeting, among other celebrated men, Carlyle, with whom he formed a friendship that deeply influenced them both, and which is one of the most famous friendships of great literary men. Returning home, he settled in Concord in the "Old Manse," which had been for a time the residence of Hawthorne. He now began to support himself and his family by lecturing. In 1836 he wrote his immortal "Concord Hymn," and published his first essay, "Nature," of which, however, less than five hundred copies were sold in ten years. In 1837 Emerson delivered his famous address before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard on "The American Scholar" in which he made a strong plea for the emancipation of American thought. "We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds." This striving after originality is characteristic of Emerson. "Think for yourself," he says again and again. "Believe your own thought." "The highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato, and Milton is that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke, not what men, but what *they*, thought."

In 1841 the first volume of the "Essays" appeared, followed by the second in 1844. In these two volumes are included the most notable and representative of all his writings. In any one of these essays may be found the germ of the whole of Emerson's philosophy, and any one of them may be taken as fully representative of his style. The titles do not, except in the most general way, give an indication of their contents. In each of these essays, whether it be the one on "History," on "Self-Reliance," on "Compensation," on "Love," on "Friendship," or on "The Over-Soul," we shall find the same intellectual merits and shortcomings, the same literary beauties and defects. In 1847 Emerson again visited Europe, where he delivered a series of lectures afterwards published in the volume entitled "Representative Men." Gradually the lofty character of his genius came to be recognized, and when he published his "Conduct of Life" twenty-five hundred copies were sold in two days. Toward the close of life his mind became clouded, but he continued his work to the very end, dying in Concord in 1882 at the age of seventy-nine.

Emerson's high place in American literature is undisputed. He is the foremost thinker this country has produced. As a French critic remarked, "In this North America, which is pictured to us as so materialistic, I find the most ideal writer of our times." Emerson was noted also as a poet, though as a poet he is lacking in perfection of form. It is as an essayist and philosopher that he is pre-eminent. His literary style is distinctly characteristic of the man. His sentences are short and epigrammatic, Saxon words usually predominating. Some of his passages are difficult of interpretation, but in Emerson, as in Shakespeare and in all writers of the highest genius, there will always remain greater depths to be revealed, and loftier beauties to be discovered with each reading.

## COMPENSATION

**E**VER since I was a boy I have wished to write a discourse on compensation: for, it seemed to me when very young, that, on this subject, life was ahead of theology, and the people knew more than the preachers taught. The documents too, from which the doctrine is to be drawn, charmed my fancy by their endless variety, and lay always before me, even in sleep; for they are the tools in our hands, the bread in our basket, the transactions of the street, the farm, and the dwelling-house, the greetings, the relations, the debts and credits, the influence of character, the nature and endowment of all men. It seemed to me also that in it might be shown men a ray of divinity, the present action of the soul of this world, clean from all vestige of tradition, and so the heart of man might be bathed by an inundation of eternal love, conversing with that which he knows was always and always must be, because it really is now. It appeared, moreover, that if this doctrine could be stated in terms with any resemblance to those bright intuitions in which this truth is sometimes revealed to us, it would be a star in many dark hours and crooked passages in our journey that would not suffer us to lose our way.

I was lately confirmed in these desires by hearing a sermon at church. The preacher, a man esteemed for his orthodoxy, unfolded in the ordinary manner the doctrine of the last judgment. He assumed that judgment is not executed in this world; that the wicked are successful; that the good are miserable; and then urged from reason and from Scripture a compensation to be made to both parties in the next life. No offence appeared to be taken by the congregation at this doctrine. As far as I could observe, when the meeting broke up, they separated without remark on the sermon.

Yet what was the import of this teaching? What did the

preacher mean by saying that the good are miserable in the present life? Was it that houses and lands, offices, wine, horses, dress, luxury, are had by unprincipled men, whilst the saints are poor and despised; and that a compensation is to be made to these last hereafter, by giving them the like gratifications another day—bank-stock and doubloons, venison and champagne? This must be the compensation intended; for, what else? Is it that they are to have leave to pray and praise? to love and serve men? Why, that they can do now. The legitimate inference the disciple would draw, was; "We are to have such a good time as the sinners have now;"—or, to push it to its extreme import—"You sin now; we shall sin by and by; we would sin now, if we could; not being successful, we expect our revenge to-morrow."

The fallacy lay in the immense concession that the bad are successful; that justice is not done now. The blindness of the preacher consisted in deferring to the base estimate of the market of what constitutes a manly success, instead of confronting and convicting the world from the truth; announcing the presence of the soul; the omnipotence of the will: and so establishing the standard of good and ill, of success and falsehood, and summoning the dead to its present tribunal.

I find a similar base tone in the popular religious works of the day, and the same doctrines assumed by the literary men when occasionally they treat the related topics. I think that our popular theology has gained in decorum, and not in principle, over the superstitions it has displaced. But men are better than this theology. Their daily life gives it the lie. Every ingenuous and aspiring soul leaves the doctrine behind him in his own experience; and all men feel sometimes the falsehood which they cannot demonstrate. For men are wiser than they know. That which they hear in schools and pulpits without afterthought, if said in conversation, would probably be questioned in silence. If a man dogmatize in a mixed company on providence and the divine laws, he is answered by a silence which conveys well enough to an observer the dissatisfaction of the hearer, but his incapacity to make his own statement.

I shall attempt in this and the following chapter to record some facts that indicate the path of the law of compensation;

happy beyond my expectation, if I shall truly draw the smallest arc of this circle.

Polarity, or action and reaction, we meet in every part of nature; in darkness and light; in heat and cold; in the ebb and flow of waters; in male and female; in the inspiration and expiration of plants and animals; in the systole and diastole of the heart; in the undulations of fluids, and of sound; in the centrifugal and centripetal gravity; in electricity, galvanism, and chemical affinity. Superinduce magnetism at one end of a needle; the opposite magnetism takes place at the other end. If the south attracts, the north repels. To empty here, you must condense there. An inevitable dualism bisects nature, so that each thing is a half, and suggests another thing to make it whole; as spirit, matter; man, woman; subjective, objective; in, out; upper, under; motion, rest; yea, nay.

Whilst the world is thus dual, so is every one of its parts. The entire system of things gets represented in every particle. There is somewhat that resembles the ebb and flow of the sea, day and night, man and woman, in a single needle of the pine, in a kernel of corn, in each individual of every animal tribe. The reaction so grand in the elements, is repeated within these small boundaries. For example, in the animal kingdom, the physiologist has observed that no creatures are favorites, but a certain compensation balances every gift and every defect. A surplusage given to one part is paid out of a reduction from another part of the same creature. If the head and neck are enlarged, the trunk and extremities are cut short.

The theory of the mechanic forces is another example. What we gain in power is lost in time; and the converse. The periodic or compensating errors of the planets, is another instance. The influences of climate and soil in political history are another. The cold climate invigorates. The barren soil does not breed fevers, crocodiles, tigers, or scorpions.

The same dualism underlies the nature and condition of man. Every excess causes a defect; every defect an excess. Every sweet hath its sour; every evil its good. Every faculty which is a receiver of pleasure, has an equal penalty put on its abuse. It is to answer for its moderation with its life. For every grain of wit there is a grain of folly. For everything you have missed, you have gained something else; and for



everything you gain, you lose something. If riches increase, they are increased that use them. If the gatherer gathers too much, nature takes out of the man what she puts into his chest; swells the estate, but kills the owner. Nature hates monopolies and exceptions. The waves of the sea do not more speedily seek a level from their loftiest tossing, than the varieties of condition tend to equalize themselves. There is always some levelling circumstance that puts down the overbearing, the strong, the rich, the fortunate, substantially on the same ground with all others. Is a man too strong and fierce for society, and by temper and position a bad citizen—a morose ruffian with a dash of the pirate in him—nature sends him a troop of pretty sons and daughters who are getting along in the dame's classes at the village school, and love and fear for them smooth his grim scowl to courtesy. Thus she contrives to intenerate the granite and felspar, takes the boar out and puts the lamb in, and keeps her balance true.

The farmer imagines power and place are fine things. But the President has paid dear for his White House. It has commonly cost him all his peace and the best of his manly attributes. To preserve for a short time so conspicuous an appearance before the world, he is content to eat dust before the real masters who stand erect behind the throne. Or, do men desire the more substantial and permanent grandeur of genius? Neither has this an immunity. He who by force of will or of thought is great, and overlooks thousands, has the responsibility of overlooking. With every influx of light, comes new danger. Has he light? he must bear witness to the light, and always outrun that sympathy which gives him such keen satisfaction, by his fidelity to new revelations of the incessant soul. He must hate father and mother, wife and child. Has he all that the world loves and admires and covets?—he must cast behind him their admiration, and afflict them by faithfulness to his truth, and become a by-word and a hissing.

This law writes the laws of cities and nations. It will not be balked of its end in the smallest iota. It is in vain to build or plot or combine against it. Things refuse to be mismanaged long. *Res nolunt diu male administrari*. Though no checks to a new evil appear, the checks exist and will appear.

If the government is cruel, the governor's life is not safe. If you tax too high, the revenue will yield nothing. If you make the criminal code sanguinary, juries will not convict. Nothing arbitrary, nothing artificial can endure. The true life and satisfactions of man seem to elude the utmost rigors or felicities of condition, and to establish themselves with great indifference under all varieties of circumstance. Under all governments the influence of character remains the same—in Turkey and in New England about alike. Under the primeval despots of Egypt, history honestly confesses that man must have been as free as culture could make him.

These appearances indicate the fact that the universe is represented in every one of its particles. Everything in nature contains all the powers of nature. Everything is made of one hidden stuff; as the naturalist sees one type under every metamorphosis, and regards a horse as a running man, a fish as a swimming man, a bird as a flying man, a tree as a rooted man. Each new form repeats not only the main character of the type, but part for part all the details, all the aims, furtherances, hinderances, energies, and whole system of every other. Every occupation, trade, art, transaction, is a compend of the world, and a correlative of every other. Each one is an entire emblem of human life; of its good and ill, its trials, its enemies, its course and its end. And each one must somehow accommodate the whole man, and recite all his destiny.

The world globes itself in a drop of dew. The microscope cannot find the animalcule which is less perfect for being little. Eyes, ears, taste, smell, motion, resistance, appetite, and organs of reproduction that take hold on eternity—all find room to consist in the small creature. So do we put our life into every act. The true doctrine of omnipresence is that God reappears with all his parts in every moss and cobweb. The value of the universe contrives to throw itself into every point. If the good is there, so is the evil; if the affinity, so the repulsion; if the force, so the limitation.

Thus is the universe alive. All things are moral. That soul which within us is a sentiment, outside of us is a law. We feel its inspirations; out there in history we can see its fatal strength. It is almighty. All nature feels its grasp. "It is

in the world and the world was made by it." It is eternal, but its enacts itself in time and space. Justice is not postponed. A perfect equity adjusts its balance in all parts of life. *Οἱ κύβοι Διὸς ἀεὶ εὐπίπτουσι.* The dice of God are always loaded. The world looks like a multiplication-table or a mathematical equation, which, turn it how you will, balances itself. Take what figure you will, its exact value, nor more nor less, still returns to you. Every secret is told, every crime is punished, every virtue rewarded, every wrong redressed, in silence and certainty. What we call retribution is the universal necessity by which the whole appears wherever a part appears. If you see smoke, there must be a fire. If you see a hand or a limb, you know that the trunk to which it belongs, is there behind.

Every act rewards itself, or, in other words, integrates itself, in a twofold manner; first, in the thing, or, in real nature; and secondly, in the circumstance, or, in apparent nature. Men call the circumstance the retribution. The causal retribution is in the thing, and is seen by the soul. The retribution in the circumstance is seen by the understanding; it is inseparable from the thing, but is often spread over a long time, and so does not become distinct until after many years. The specific stripes may follow late after the offence, but they follow because they accompany it. Crime and punishment grow out of one stem. Punishment is a fruit that unsuspected ripens within the flower of the pleasure which concealed it. Cause and effect, means and end, seed and fruit, cannot be severed; for the effect already blooms in the cause, the end preëxists in the means, the fruit in the seed.

Whilst thus the world will be whole, and refuses to be disparted, we seek to act partially; to sunder; to appropriate; for example—to gratify the senses, we sever the pleasure of the senses from the needs of the character. The ingenuity of man has been dedicated always to the solution of one problem—how to detach the sensual sweet, the sensual strong, the sensual bright, etc., from the moral sweet, the moral deep, the moral fair; that is, again, to contrive to cut clean off this upper surface so thin as to leave it bottomless; to get a one end, without an other end. The soul says, Eat; the body would feast. The soul says, The man and woman shall be one flesh and one soul; the body would join the flesh only. The

soul says, Have dominion over all things to the ends of virtue; the body would have the power over things to its own ends.

The soul strives amain to live and work through all things. It would be the only fact. All things shall be added unto it—power, pleasure, knowledge, beauty. The particular man aims to be somebody; to set up for himself; to truck and higgler for a private good; and, in particulars, to ride, that he may ride; to dress, that he may be dressed; to eat, that he may eat; and to govern that he may be seen. Men seek to be great; they would have offices, wealth, power, and fame. They think that to be great is to get only one side of nature—the sweet, without the other side—the bitter.

Steadily is this dividing and detaching counteracted. Up to this day, it must be owned, no projector has had the smallest success. The parted water reunites behind our hand. Pleasure is taken out of pleasant things, profit out of profitable things, power out of strong things, the moment we seek to separate them from the whole. We can no more halve things and get the sensual good, by itself, than we can get an inside that shall have no outside, or a light without a shadow. "Drive out nature with a fork, she comes running back."

Life invests itself with inevitable conditions, which the unwise seek to dodge, which one and another brags that he does not know; brags that they do not touch him—but the brag is on his lips, the conditions are in his soul. If he escapes them in one part, they attack him in another more vital part. If he has escaped them in form, and in the appearance, it is that he has resisted his life, and fled from himself, and the retribution is so much death. So signal is the failure of all attempts to make this separation of the good from the bad, that the experiment would not be tried—since to try it is to be mad—but for the circumstance, that when the disease began in the will, of rebellion and separation, the intellect is at once infected, so that the man ceases to see God whole in each object, but is able to see the sensual allurements of an object, and not see the sensual hurt; he sees the mermaid's head, but not the dragon's tail; and thinks he can cut off that which he would have, from that which he would not have. "How secret art thou who dwellest in the highest heavens in silence, O thou only great God, sprinkling with an un-

wearied providence certain penal blindnesses upon such as have unbridled desires!"<sup>1</sup>

The human soul is true to these facts in the painting of fable, of history, of law, of proverbs, of conversation. It finds a tongue in literature unawares. Thus the Greeks called Jupiter, Supreme Mind; but having traditionally ascribed to him many base actions, they involuntarily made amends to reason, by tying up the hands of so bad a god. He is made as helpless as a king of England. Prometheus knows one secret, which Jove must bargain for; Minerva, another. He cannot get his own thunders; Minerva keeps the key of them.

"Of all the gods I only know the keys  
That ope the solid doors within whose vaults  
His thunders sleep."

A plain confession of the in-working of the All, and of its moral aim. The Indian mythology ends in the same ethics; and indeed it would seem impossible for any fable to be invented and get any currency which was not moral. Aurora forgot to ask youth for her lover, and though Tithonus is immortal, he is old. Achilles is not quite invulnerable; for Thetis held him by the heel when she dipped him in the Styx, and the sacred waters did not wash that part. Siegfried, in the Nibelungen, is not quite immortal, for a leaf fell on his back whilst he was bathing in the dragon's blood, and that spot which it covered is mortal. And so it always is. There is a crack in everything God has made. Always, it would seem, there is this vindictive circumstance stealing in at unawares, even into the wild poesy in which the human fancy attempted to make bold holiday, and to shake itself free of the old laws—this back-stroke, this kick of the gun, certifying that the law is fatal; that in nature, nothing can be given, all things are sold.

This is that ancient doctrine of Nemesis, who keeps watch in the universe, and lets no offence go unchastised. The Furies, they said, are attendants on Justice, and if the sun in heaven should transgress his path, they would punish him. The poets related that stone walls, and iron swords, and leathern thongs had an occult sympathy with the wrongs of

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine: "Confessions," Bk. I.

their owners; that the belt which Ajax gave Hector dragged the Trojan hero over the field at the wheels of the car of Achilles; and the sword which Hector gave Ajax was that on whose point Ajax fell. They recorded that when the Thasians erected a statue to Theogenes, a victor in the games, one of his rivals went to it by night, and endeavored to throw it down by repeated blows, until at last he moved it from its pedestal and was crushed to death beneath its fall.

This voice of fable has in it somewhat divine. It came from thought above the will of the writer. That is the best part of each writer, which has nothing private in it. That is the best part of each, which he does not know, that which flowed out of his constitution, and not from his too active invention; that which in the study of a single artist you might not easily find, but in the study of many, you would abstract as the spirit of them all. Phidias it is not, but the work of man in that early Hellenic world, that I would know. The name and circumstance of Phidias, however convenient for history, embarrasses when we come to the highest criticism. We are to see that which man was tending to do in a given period, and was hindered, or, if you will, modified in doing, by the interfering volitions of Phidias, of Dante, of Shakespeare, the organ whereby man at the moment wrought.

Still more striking is the expression of this fact in the proverbs of all nations, which are always the literature of reason, or the statements of an absolute truth, without qualification. Proverbs, like the sacred books of each nation, are the sanctuary of the intuitions. That which the droning world, chained to appearances, will not allow the realist to say in his own words, it will suffer him to say in proverbs without contradiction. And this law of laws which the pulpit, the senate, and the college deny, is hourly preached in all markets and all languages by flights of proverbs, whose teaching is as true and as omnipresent as that of birds and flies.

All things are double, one against another. Tit for tat; an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth; blood for blood; measure for measure; love for love. Give and it shall be given you. He that watereth shall be watered himself. What will you have? quoth God; pay for it and take it. Nothing venture, nothing have. Thou shalt be paid exactly for what

thou hast done, no more, no less. Who doth not work shall not eat. Harm watch, harm catch. Curses always recoil on the head of him who imprecates them. If you put a chain around the neck of a slave, the other end fastens itself around your own. Bad counsel confounds the adviser. The devil is an ass.

It is thus written, because it is thus in life. Our action is overmastered and characterized above our will by the law of nature. We aim at a petty end quite aside from the public good, but our act arranges itself by irresistible magnetism in a line with the poles of the world.

A man cannot speak but he judges himself. With his will, or against his will, he draws his portrait to the eye of his companions by every word. Every opinion reacts on him who utters it. It is a thread-ball thrown at a mark, but the other end remains in the thrower's bag. Or, rather, it is a harpoon thrown at the whale, unwinding, as it flies, a coil of cord in the boat, and if the harpoon is not good, or not well thrown, it will go nigh to cut the steersman in twain, or to sink the boat.

You cannot do wrong without suffering wrong. "No man had ever a point of pride that was not injurious to him," said Burke. The exclusive in fashionable life does not see that he excludes himself from enjoyment, in the attempt to appropriate it. The exclusionist in religion does not see that he shuts the door of heaven on himself, in striving to shut out others. Treat men as pawns and ninepins, and you shall suffer as well as they. If you leave out their heart, you shall lose your own. The senses would make things of all persons; of women, of children, of the poor. The vulgar proverb, "I will get it from his purse or get it from his skin," is sound philosophy.

All infractions of love and equity in our social relations are speedily punished. They are punished by fear. Whilst I stand in simple relations to my fellow-man, I have no displeasure in meeting him. We meet as water meets water, or a current of air meets another, with perfect diffusion and interpenetration of nature. But as soon as there is any departure from simplicity, and attempt at halfness, or good for me that is not good for him, my neighbor feels the wrong; he shrinks from

## COMPENSATION

me as far as I have shrunk from him ; his eyes no longer shine ; there is war between us ; there is hate in him ; fear in me.

All the old abuses in society, the great and universal and the petty and particular, all unjust accumulations of property and power, are avenged in the same manner. Fear is an instructor of great sagacity, and the herald of all revolutions. One thing he always teaches, that there is rottenness where he appears. He is a carrion crow, and though you see not well what he hovers for, there is death somewhere. Our property is timid, our laws are timid, our cultivated classes are timid. Fear for ages has boded and mowed and gibbered over government and property. That obscene bird is not there for nothing. He indicates great wrongs which must be revised.

Of the like nature is that expectation of change which instantly follows the suspension of our voluntary activity. The terror of cloudless noon, the emerald of Polycrates, the awe of prosperity, the instinct which leads every generous soul to impose on itself tasks of a noble asceticism and vicarious virtue, are the tremblings of the balance of justice through the heart and mind of man.

Experienced men of the world know very well that it is always best to pay scot and lot as they go along, and that a man often pays dear for a small frugality. The borrower runs in his own debt. Has a man gained anything who has received a hundred favors and rendered none ? Has he gained by borrowing, through indolence or cunning, his neighbor's wares, or horses, or money ? There arises on the deed the instant acknowledgment of benefit on the one part, and of debt on the other ; that is, of superiority and inferiority. The transaction remains in the memory of himself and his neighbor ; and every new transaction alters, according to its nature, their relation to each other. He may soon come to see that he had better have broken his own bones than to have ridden in his neighbor's coach, and that "the highest price he can pay for a thing is to ask for it."

A wise man will extend this lesson to all parts of life, and know that it is always the part of prudence to face every claimant, and pay every just demand on your time, your talents, or your heart. Always pay ; for, first or last, you must



pay your entire debt. Persons and events may stand for a time between you and justice, but it is only a postponement. You must pay at last your own debt. If you are wise, you will dread a prosperity which only loads you with more. Benefit is the end of nature. But for every benefit which you receive, a tax is levied. He is great who confers the most benefits. He is base—and that is the only base thing in the universe—to receive favors and render none. In the order of nature we cannot render benefits to those from whom we receive them, or only seldom. But the benefit we receive must be rendered again, line for line, deed for deed, cent for cent, to somebody. Beware of too much good staying in your hand. It will fast corrupt and worm worms. Pay it away quickly in some sort.

Labor is watched over by the same pitiless laws. Cheapest, say the prudent, is the dearest labor. What we buy in a broom, a mat, a wagon, a knife, is some application of good sense to a common want. It is best to pay in your land a skilful gardener, or to buy good sense applied to gardening; in your sailor, good sense applied to navigation; in the house, good sense applied to cooking, sewing, serving; in your agent, good sense applied to accounts and affairs. So do you multiply your presence, or spread yourself throughout your estate. But because of the dual constitution of all things, in labor as in life there can be no cheating. The thief steals from himself. The swindler swindles himself. For the real price of labor is knowledge and virtue, whereof wealth and credit are signs. These signs, like paper money, may be counterfeited or stolen, but that which they represent, namely, knowledge and virtue, cannot be counterfeited or stolen. These ends of labor cannot be answered but by real exertions of the mind, and in obedience to pure motives. The cheat, the defaulter, the gambler cannot extort the benefit, cannot extort the knowledge of material and moral nature which his honest care and pains yield to the operative. The law of nature is, Do the thing, and you shall have the power: but they who do not the thing have not the power.

Human labor, through all its forms, from the sharpening of a stake to the construction of a city or an epic, is one immense illustration of the perfect compensation of the universe.

Everywhere and always this law is sublime. The absolute balance of give and take, the doctrine that everything has its price; and if that price is not paid, not that thing but something else is obtained, and that it is impossible to get anything without its price—this doctrine is not less sublime in the columns of a ledger than in the budgets of states, in the laws of light and darkness, in all the action and reaction of nature. I cannot doubt that the high laws which each man sees ever implicated in those processes with which he is conversant, the stern ethics which sparkle on his chisel-edge, which are measured out by his plumb and foot-rule, which stand as manifest in the footing of the shop-bill as in the history of a state—do recommend to him his trade, and though seldom named, exalt his business to his imagination.

The league between virtue and nature engages all things to assume a hostile front to vice. The beautiful laws and substances of the world persecute and whip the traitor. He finds that things are arranged for truth and benefit, but there is no den in the wide world to hide a rogue. There is no such thing as concealment. Commit a crime, and the earth is made of glass. Commit a crime, and it seems as if a coat of snow fell on the ground, such as reveals in the woods the track of every partridge and fox and squirrel and mole. You cannot recall the spoken word, you cannot wipe out the foot-track, you cannot draw up the ladder, so as to leave no inlet or clue. Always some damning circumstance transpires. The laws and substances of nature, water, snow, wind, gravitation, become penalties to the thief.

On the other hand, the law holds with equal sureness for all right action. Love, and you shall be loved. All love is mathematically just, as much as the two sides of an algebraic equation. The good man has absolute good, which like fire turns everything to its own nature, so that you cannot do him any harm; but as the royal armies sent against Napoleon, when he approached, cast down their colors and from enemies became friends, so do disasters of all kinds, as sickness, offence, poverty, prove benefactors.

“Winds blow and waters roll  
Strength to the brave, and power and deity,  
Yet in themselves are nothing.”

The good are befriended even by weakness and defect. As no man had ever a point of pride that was not injurious to him, so no man had ever a defect that was not somewhere made useful to him. The stag in the fable admired his horns and blamed his feet, but when the hunter came, his feet saved him, and afterwards, caught in the thicket, his horns destroyed him. Every man in his lifetime needs to thank his faults. As no man thoroughly understands a truth until first he has contended against it, so no man has a thorough acquaintance with the hinderances or talents of men, until he has suffered from the one, and seen the triumph of the other over his own want of the same. Has he a defect of temper that unfits him to live in society? Thereby he is driven to entertain himself alone, and acquire habits of self-help; and thus, like the wounded oyster, he mends his shell with pearl.

Our strength grows out of our weakness. Not until we are pricked and stung and sorely shot at, awakens the indignation which arms itself with secret forces. A great man is always willing to be little. Whilst he sits on the cushion of advantages, he goes to sleep. When he is pushed, tormented, defeated, he has a chance to learn something; he has been put on his wits, on his manhood; he has gained facts; learns his ignorance; is cured of the insanity of conceit; has got moderation and real skill. The wise man always throws himself on the side of his assailants. It is more his interest than it is theirs to find his weak point. The wound cicatrizes and falls off from him, like a dead skin, and when they would triumph, lo! he has passed on invulnerable. Blame is safer than praise. I hate to be defended in a newspaper. As long as all that is said, is said against me, I feel a certain assurance of success. But as soon as honeyed words of praise are spoken for me, I feel as one that lies unprotected before his enemies. In general, every evil to which we do not succumb, is a benefactor. As the Sandwich Islander believes that the strength and valor of the enemy he kills, passes into himself, so we gain the strength of the temptation we resist.

The same guards which protect us from disaster, defect, and enmity, defend us, if we will, from selfishness and fraud. Bolts and bars are not the best of our institutions, nor is shrewdness in trade a mark of wisdom. Men suffer all their

life long, under the foolish superstition that they can be cheated. But it is as impossible for a man to be cheated by anyone but himself, as for a thing to be, and not to be, at the same time. There is a third silent party to all our bargains. The nature and soul of things takes on itself the guaranty of the fulfilment of every contract, so that honest service cannot come to loss. If you serve an ungrateful master, serve him the more. Put God in your debt. Every stroke shall be repaid. The longer the payment is withholden, the better for you; for compound interest on compound interest is the rate and usage of this exchequer.

The history of persecution is a history of endeavors to cheat nature, to make water run up hill, to twist a rope of sand. It makes no difference whether the actors be many or one, a tyrant or a mob. A mob is a society of bodies voluntarily bereaving themselves of reason and traversing its work. The mob is man voluntarily descending to the nature of the beast. Its fit hour of activity is night. Its actions are insane like its whole constitution. It persecutes a principle: it would whip a right; it would tar and feather justice, by inflicting fire and outrage upon the houses and persons of those who have these. It resembles the prank of boys who run with fire-engines to put out the ruddy aurora streaming to the stars. The inviolate spirit turns their spite against the wrong-doers. The martyr cannot be dishonored. Every lash inflicted is a tongue of fame; every prison a more illustrious abode; every burned book or house enlightens the world; every suppressed or expunged word reverberates through the earth from side to side. The minds of men are at last aroused; reason looks out and justifies her own, and malice finds all her work vain. It is the whipper who is whipped, and the tyrant who is undone.

Thus do all things preach the indifferency of circumstances. The man is all. Everything has two sides, a good and an evil. Every advantage has its tax. I learn to be content. But the doctrine of compensation is not the doctrine of indifferency. The thoughtless say, on hearing these representations, What boots it to do well? there is one event to good and evil; if I gain any good, I must pay for it; if I lose my good, I gain some other; all actions are indifferent.

There is a deeper fact in the soul than compensation, to wit,

its own nature. The soul is not a compensation, but a life. The soul *is*. Under all this running sea of circumstance, whose waters ebb and flow with perfect balance, lies the aboriginal abyss of real being. Existence, or God, is not a relation, or a part, but the whole. Being is the vast affirmative, excluding negation, self-balanced, and swallowing up all relations, parts and times, within itself. Nature, truth, virtue are the influx from thence. Vice is the absence or departure of the same. Nothing, falsehood, may indeed stand as the great night or shade, on which, as a background, the living universe paints itself forth; but no fact is begotten by it; it cannot work; for it is not. It cannot work any good; it cannot work any harm. It is harm inasmuch as it is worse not to be than to be.

We feel defrauded of the retribution due to evil acts, because the criminal adheres to his vice and contumacy, and does not come to a crisis or judgment anywhere in visible nature. There is no stunning confutation of his nonsense before men and angels. Has he therefore outwitted the law? Inasmuch as he carries the malignity and the lie with him, he so far deceases from nature. In some manner there will be a demonstration of the wrong to the understanding also; but should we not see it, this deadly deduction makes square the eternal account.

Neither can it be said, on the other hand, that the gain of rectitude must be bought by any loss. There is no penalty to virtue; no penalty to wisdom; they are proper additions of being. In a virtuous action, I properly *am*; in a virtuous act, I add to the world; I plant into deserts conquered from chaos and nothing, and see the darkness receding on the limits of the horizon. There can be no excess to love; none to knowledge; none to beauty, when these attributes are considered in the purest sense. The soul refuses all limits. It affirms in man always an optimism, never a pessimism.

His life is a progress, and not a station. His instinct is trust. Our instinct uses "more" and "less" in application to man, always of the presence of the soul, and not of its absence; the brave man is greater than the coward; the true, the benevolent, the wise, is more a man and not less, than the fool and knave. There is, therefore, no tax on the good of

virtue; for, that is the incoming of God himself, or absolute existence, without any comparative. All external good has its tax, and if it came without desert or sweat, has no root in me and the next wind will blow it away. But all the good of nature is the soul's, and may be had, if paid for in nature's lawful coin, that is, by labor which the heart and the head will allow. I no longer wish to meet a good I do not earn, for example, to find a pot of buried gold, knowing that it brings with it new responsibility. I do not wish more external goods—neither possessions, nor honors, nor powers, nor persons. The gain is apparent: the tax is certain. But there is no tax on the knowledge that the compensation exists, and that it is not desirable to dig up treasure. Herein I rejoice with a serene eternal peace. I contract the boundaries of possible mischief. I learn the wisdom of St. Bernard, "Nothing can work me damage except myself; the harm that I sustain, I carry about with me, and never am a real sufferer but by my own fault."

In the nature of the soul is the compensation for the inequalities of condition. The radical tragedy of nature seems to be the distinction of more and less. How can less not feel the pain; how not feel indignation or malevolence towards more? Look at those who have less faculty, and one feels sad, and knows not well what to make of it. Almost he shuns their eye; almost he fears they will upbraid God. What should they do? It seems a great injustice. But face the facts, and see them nearly, and these mountainous inequalities vanish. Love reduces them all, as the sun melts the iceberg in the sea. The heart and soul of all men being one, this bitterness of *his* and *mine* ceases. His is mine. I am my brother, and my brother is me. If I feel overshadowed and outdone by great neighbors, I can yet love; I can still receive; and he that loveth, maketh his own the grandeur he loves. Thereby I make the discovery that my brother is my guardian, acting for me with the friendliest designs, and the estate I so admired and envied, is my own. It is the eternal nature of the soul to appropriate and make all things its own. Jesus and Shakespeare are fragments of the soul, and by love I conquer and incorporate them in my own conscious domain. His virtue—is not that mine? His wit—if it cannot be made mine, it is not wit.

Such, also, is the natural history of calamity. The changes which break up at short intervals the prosperity of men, are advertisements of a nature whose law is growth. Evermore it is the order of nature to grow, and every soul is by this intrinsic necessity quitting its whole system of things, its friends, and home, and laws, and faith, as the shell-fish crawls out of its beautiful but stony case, because it no longer admits of its growth, and slowly forms a new house. In proportion to the vigor of the individual, these revolutions are frequent, until in some happier mind they are incessant, and all worldly relations hang very loosely about him, becoming, as it were, a transparent fluid membrane through which the form is alway seen, and not as in most men an indurated heterogeneous fabric of many dates, and of no settled character, in which the man is imprisoned. Then there can be enlargement, and the man of to-day scarcely recognizes the man of yesterday. And such should be the outward biography of man in time, a putting off of dead circumstances day by day, as he renews his raiment day by day. But to us, in our lapsed estate, resting not advancing, resisting not co-operating with the divine expansion, this growth comes by shocks.

We cannot part with our friends. We cannot let our angels go. We do not see that they only go out, that archangels may come in. We are idolaters of the old. We do not believe in the riches of the soul, in its proper eternity and omnipresence. We do not believe there is any force in to-day to rival or re-create that beautiful yesterday. We linger in the ruins of the old tent, where once we had bread and shelter and organs, nor believe that the spirit can feed, cover, and nerve us again. We cannot again find aught so dear, so sweet, so graceful. But we sit and weep in vain. The voice of the Almighty saith, "Up and onward forevermore!" We cannot stay amid the ruins. Neither will we rely on the new; and so we walk ever with reverted eyes, like those monsters who look backwards.

And yet the compensations of calamity are made apparent to the understanding also, after long intervals of time. A fever, a mutilation, a cruel disappointment, a loss of wealth, a loss of friends seems at the moment unpaid loss, and unpay-

able. But the sure years reveal the deep remedial force that underlies all facts. The death of a dear friend, wife, brother, lover, which seemed nothing but privation, somewhat later assumes the aspect of a guide or genius; for it commonly operates revolutions in our way of life, terminates an epoch of infancy or of youth which was waiting to be closed, breaks up a wonted occupation, or a household, or style of living, and allows the formation of new ones more friendly to the growth of character. It permits or constrains the formation of new acquaintances, and the reception of new influences that prove of the first importance to the next years; and the man or woman who would have remained a sunny garden flower, with no room for its roots and too much sunshine for its head, by the falling of the walls and the neglect of the gardener, is made the banian of the forest, yielding shade and fruit to wide neighborhoods of men.





**THE PROCESSION OF LIFE**

—

**BY**

**NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE**

## NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

1804—1864

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born at Salem, Massachusetts, in 1804, and came of a seafaring family. Owing to the death of his father, much of his boyhood was passed with an uncle among the woods and lakes of Maine, a circumstance that, no doubt, intensified his love of nature and of solitude. After graduating from Bowdoin College, where his classmates included Longfellow and Franklin Pierce, he settled in 1825 in Salem. Here he remained for twelve years, reading, writing and burning his manuscripts, and becoming, in his own familiar phrase, "the obscurest man of letters in America." In 1837 he published the first series of "Twice-Told Tales." Through the influence of Bancroft he received an appointment in the Boston Custom House in 1837. In 1841 Hawthorne became a member of the Brook Farm community, an experience which furnished material for his "Blithedale Romance," published eleven years later. In 1843 he married Miss Peabody, and now began what proved a most happy wedded life in the "Old Manse" at Concord. "Mosses from an Old Manse" came from the press in 1846, and the same year Hawthorne removed to Salem, where he held another government appointment for four years. In 1850 "The Scarlet Letter" appeared, and made its author at once the most famous writer in America. An edition of five thousand copies was sold in ten days. "The House of the Seven Gables" was published the following year, and "The Blithedale Romance" was brought out in 1852.

In 1853 Hawthorne was appointed consul at Liverpool by President Pierce. He served in this capacity with honor and distinction for four years, and after his resignation spent three years in study and travel in France, Italy, and England. The English, and the French and Italian notebooks, published after his death, contain the record of many delightful impressions received during his travels abroad. In 1860 Hawthorne published his last complete romance "The Marble Faun." He then returned to Concord, where, after a lingering illness, he passed away in 1864. After his death a number of fragments of his works were published, including three incomplete romances and the "Note Books."

Hawthorne in many respects is entitled to the first rank in American literature. Although he called his books romances, they prove on closer study to be infinitely more. Few writers have described more accurately and studied more profoundly the influences of the moral and spiritual forces in human life. Considered as narratives of the outward incidents of human life, or as depicting the innermost workings of the human conscience, his tales are of rare excellence. In his shorter sketches written in the essay style, such as "The Procession of Human Life," in which he treats the theme of the universal brotherhood of man, Hawthorne also shows the profound and philosophic bent of his intellect. His style is perhaps the most polished of all American prose writers. He revised and even burned his manuscripts repeatedly, satisfied only with the nearest approach to literary perfection that lay in his power. It is thus that his work in every field he attempted exhibits the highest degree of artistic excellence.

## THE PROCESSION OF LIFE

LIFE figures itself to me as a festal or funeral procession. All of us have our places and are to move onward under the direction of the chief marshal. The grand difficulty results from the invariably mistaken principles on which the deputy marshals seek to arrange this immense concourse of people, so much more numerous than those that train their interminable length through streets and highways in times of political excitement. Their scheme is ancient far beyond the memory of man, or even the record of history, and has hitherto been very little modified by the innate sense of something wrong and the dim perception of better methods that have disquieted all the ages through which the procession has taken its march. Its members are classified by the merest external circumstances, and thus are more certain to be thrown out of their true positions than if no principle of arrangement were attempted. In one part of the procession we see men of landed estate or moneyed capital gravely keeping each other company for the preposterous reason that they chance to have a similar standing in the tax-gatherer's book. Trades and professions march together with scarcely a more real bond of union. In this manner, it cannot be denied, people are disentangled from the mass and separated into various classes according to certain apparent relations; all have some artificial badge which the world, and themselves among the first, learn to consider as a genuine characteristic. Fixing our attention on such outside shows of similarity or difference, we lose sight of those realities by which nature, fortune, fate, or providence has constituted for every man a brotherhood, wherein it is one great office of human wisdom to classify him. When the mind has once accustomed itself to a proper arrangement of the procession of life or a true classification of society, even though merely speculative, there is thenceforth a satisfaction which pretty well suffices for itself, without the aid of any actual reformation in the order of march.

For instance, assuming to myself the power of marshalling the aforesaid procession, I direct a trumpeter to send forth a blast loud enough to be heard from hence to China, and a herald with world-pervading voice to make proclamation for a certain class of mortals to take their places. What shall be their principle of union? After all, an external one, in comparison with many that might be found, yet far more real than those which the world has selected for a similar purpose. Let all who are afflicted with like physical diseases form themselves into ranks.

Our first attempt at classification is not very successful. It may gratify the pride of aristocracy to reflect that disease, more than any other circumstance of human life, pays due observance to the distinctions which rank and wealth and poverty and lowliness have established among mankind. Some maladies are rich and precious, and only to be acquired by the right of inheritance or purchased with gold. Of this kind is the gout, which serves as a bond of brotherhood to the purple-visaged gentry who obey the herald's voice and painfully hobble from all civilized regions of the globe to take their post in the grand procession. In mercy to their toes let us hope that the march may not be long. The dyspeptics, too, are people of good standing in the world. For them the earliest salmon is caught in our Eastern rivers, and the shy woodcock stains the dry leaves with his blood in his remotest haunts, and the turtle comes from the far Pacific islands to be gobbled up in soup. They can afford to flavor all their dishes with indolence, which, in spite of the general opinion, is a sauce more exquisitely piquant than appetite won by exercise. Apoplexy is another highly respectable disease. We will rank together all who have the symptom of dizziness in the brain, and as fast as any drop by the way supply their places with new members of the board of aldermen.

On the other hand, here come whole tribes of people whose physical lives are but a deteriorated variety of life, and themselves a meaner species of mankind, so sad an effect has been wrought by the tainted breath of cities, scanty and unwholesome food, destructive modes of labor and the lack of those moral supports that might partially have counteracted such bad influences. Behold here a train of house-painters all afflicted with a peculiar sort of colic. Next in place we will marshal those workmen in cutlery who have breathed a fatal disorder into their

lungs with the impalpable dust of steel. Tailors and shoemakers, being sedentary men, will chiefly congregate in one part of the procession and march under similar banners of disease, but among them we may observe here and there a sickly student who has left his health between the leaves of classic volumes, and clerks, likewise, who have caught their deaths on high official stools, and men of genius, too, who have written sheet after sheet with pens dipped in their hearts' blood. These are a wretched, quaking, short-breathed set. But what is this crowd of pale-cheeked, slender girls, who disturb the ear with the multiplicity of their short, dry coughs! They are seamstresses who have plied the daily and nightly needle in the service of master-tailors and close-fisted contractors, until now it is almost time for each to hem the borders of her own shroud. Consumption points their place in the procession. With their sad sisterhood are intermingled many youthful maidens who have sickened in aristocratic mansions, and for whose aid science has unavailingly searched its volumes and whom breathless love has watched. In our ranks the rich maiden and the poor seamstress may walk arm in arm. We might find innumerable other instances where the bond of mutual disease—not to speak of nation-sweeping pestilence—embraces high and low and makes the king a brother of the clown. But it is not hard to own that disease is the natural aristocrat. Let him keep his state and have his established orders of rank and wear his royal mantle of the color of a fever-flush, and let the noble and wealthy boast their own physical infirmities and display their symptoms as the badges of high station. All things considered, these are as proper subjects of human pride as any relations of human rank that men can fix upon.

Sound again, thou deep-breathed trumpeter!—and, herald, with thy voice of might, shout forth another summons that shall reach the old baronial castles of Europe and the rudest cabin of our Western wilderness! What class is next to take its place in the procession of mortal life? Let it be those whom the gifts of intellect have united in a noble brotherhood.

Ay, this is a reality before which the conventional distinctions of society melt away like a vapor when we would grasp it with the hand. Were Byron now alive, and Burns, the first would come from his ancestral abbey, flinging aside, although

unwillingly, the inherited honors of a thousand years to take the arm of the mighty peasant who grew immortal while he stooped behind his plough. These are gone, but the hall, the farmer's fireside, the hut—perhaps the palace—the counting-room, the workshop, the village, the city, life's high places and low ones, may all produce their poets whom a common temperament pervades like an electric sympathy. Peer or ploughman will muster them pair by pair and shoulder to shoulder. Even society in its most artificial state consents to this arrangement. These factory-girls from Lowell shall mate themselves with the pride of drawing-rooms and literary circles—the bluebells in fashion's nosegay, the Sapphos and Montagues and Nortons of the age.

Other modes of intellect bring together as strange companies. Silk-gowned professor of languages, give your arm to this sturdy blacksmith and deem yourself honored by the conjunction, though you behold him grimy from the anvil. All varieties of human speech are like his mother-tongue to this rare man.<sup>1</sup> Indiscriminately let those take their places, of whatever rank they come, who possess the kingly gifts to lead armies or to sway a people—nature's generals, her lawgivers, her kings, and with them, also, the deep philosophers who think the thought in one generation that is to revolutionize society in the next. With the hereditary legislator in whom eloquence is a far descended attainment—a rich echo repeated by powerful voices, from Cicero downward—we will match some wondrous backwoodsman who has caught a wild power of language from the breeze among his native forest boughs. But we may safely leave brethren and sisterhood to settle their own congenialities. Our ordinary distinctions become so trifling, so impalpable, so ridiculously visionary, in comparison with a classification founded on truth, that all talk about the matter is immediately a commonplace.

Yet, the longer I reflect, the less am I satisfied with the idea of forming a separate class of mankind on the basis of high intellectual power. At best, it is but a higher development of innate gifts common to all. Perhaps, moreover, he whose genius appears deepest and truest excels his fellows in nothing save the knack of expression; he throws out, occasionally, a lucky hint

<sup>1</sup> [Hawthorne refers here to Elihu Burritt, the "Learned Blacksmith." Burritt studied mathematics and languages while working at his forge, and

thus became familiar with Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and nearly all modern European tongues.—EDITOR.]

at truths of which every human soul is profoundly though unutterably, conscious. Therefore, though we suffer the brotherhood of intellect to march onward together, it may be doubted whether their peculiar relation will not begin to vanish as soon as the procession shall have passed beyond the circle of this present world. But we do not classify for eternity.

And next let the trumpet pour forth a funeral wail and the herald's voice give breath in one vast cry to all the groans and grievous utterances that are audible throughout the earth. We appeal now to the sacred bond of sorrow, and summon the great multitude who labor under similar afflictions to take their places in the march. How many a heart that would have been insensible to any other call has responded to the doleful accents of that voice! It has gone far and wide and high and low, and left scarcely a mortal roof unvisited. Indeed, the principle is only too universal for our purpose, and, unless we limit it, will quite break up our classification of mankind and convert the whole procession into a funeral train. We will, therefore, be at some pains to discriminate.

Here comes a lonely rich man: he has built a noble fabric for his dwelling-house, with a front of stately architecture, and marble floors, and doors of precious woods. The whole structure is as beautiful as a dream and as substantial as the native rock, but the visionary shapes of a long posterity for whose home this mansion was intended have faded into nothingness since the death of the founder's only son. The rich man gives a glance at his sable garb in one of the splendid mirrors of his drawing-room, and descending a flight of lofty steps, instinctively offers his arm to yonder poverty-stricken widow in the rusty black bonnet and with a check-apron over her patched gown. The sailor-boy who was her sole earthly stay was washed overboard in a late tempest. This couple from the palace and the alms-house are but the types of thousands more who represent the dark tragedy of life and seldom quarrel for the upper parts. Grief is such a leveller with its own dignity and its own humility that the noble and the peasant, the beggar and the monarch, will waive their pretensions to external rank without the officiousness of interference on our part. If pride—the influence of the world's false distinctions—remain in the heart, then sorrow lacks the earnestness which makes it holy and



reverend. It loses its reality and becomes a miserable shadow. On this ground we have an opportunity to assign over multitudes who would willingly claim places here to other parts of the procession. If the mourner have anything dearer than his grief, he must seek his true position elsewhere. There are so many unsubstantial sorrows which the necessity of our mortal state begets on idleness that an observer, casting aside sentiment, is sometimes led to question whether there be any real woe except absolute physical suffering and the loss of closest friends. A crowd who exhibit what they deem to be broken hearts—and among them many lovelorn maids and bachelors, and men of disappointed ambition in arts or politics, and the poor who were once rich or who have sought to be rich in vain—the great majority of these may ask admittance in some other fraternity. There is no room here. Perhaps we may institute a separate class where such unfortunates will naturally fall into the procession. Meanwhile, let them stand aside and patiently await their time.

If our trumpeter can borrow a note from the doomsday trumpet-blast, let him sound it now. The dread alarm should make the earth quake to its centre, for the herald is about to address mankind with a summons to which even the purest mortal may be sensible of some faint responding echo in his breast. In many bosoms it will awaken a still small voice more terrible than its own reverberating uproar.

The hideous appeal has swept around the globe. Come, all ye guilty ones, and rank yourselves in accordance with the brotherhood of crime. This, indeed, is an awful summons. I almost tremble to look at the strange partnerships that begin to be formed—reluctantly, but by the invincible necessity of like to like—in this part of the procession. A forger from the state-prison seizes the arm of the distinguished financier. How indignantly does the latter plead his fair reputation upon 'Change, and insist that his operations by their magnificence of scope were removed into quite another sphere of morality than those of his pitiful companion! But let him cut the connection if he can. Here comes a murderer with his clanking chains, and pairs himself—horrible to tell—with as pure and upright a man in all observable respects as ever partook of the consecrated bread and wine. He is one of those—perchance the most hopeless of

all sinners—who practise such an exemplary system of outward duties that even a deadly crime may be hidden from their own sight and remembrance under this unreal frostwork. Yet he now finds his place. Why do that pair of flaunting girls with the pert, affected laugh and the sly leer at the bystanders intrude themselves into the same rank with yonder decorous matron and that somewhat prudish maiden? Surely these poor creatures born to vice as their sole and natural inheritance can be no fit associates for women who have been guarded round about by all the proprieties of domestic life, and who could not err unless they first created the opportunity! Oh, no! It must be merely the impertinence of those unblushing hussies, and we can only wonder how such respectable ladies should have responded to a summons that was not meant for them.

We shall make short work of this miserable class, each member of which is entitled to grasp any other member's hand by that vile degradation wherein guilty error has buried all alike. The foul fiend to whom it properly belongs must relieve us of our loathsome task. Let the bond-servants of sin pass on. But neither man nor woman in whom good predominates will smile or sneer, nor bid the "Rogue's March" be played, in derision of their array. Feeling within their breasts a shuddering sympathy which at least gives token of the sin that might have been, they will thank God for any place in the grand procession of human existence save among those most wretched ones. Many, however, will be astonished at the fatal impulse that drags them thitherward. Nothing is more remarkable than the various deceptions by which guilt conceals itself from the perpetrator's conscience, and oftenest, perhaps, by the splendor of its garments. Statesmen, rulers, generals, and all men who act over an extensive sphere, are most liable to be deluded in this way; they commit wrong, devastation and murder on so grand a scale that it impresses them as speculative rather than actual, but in our procession we find them linked in detestable conjunction with the meanest criminals whose deeds have the vulgarity of petty details. Here the effect of circumstance and accident is done away, and a man finds his rank according to the spirit of his crime, in whatever shape it may have been developed.

We have called the evil; now let us call the good. The trumpet's brazen throat should pour heavenly music over the

earth and the herald's voice go forth with the sweetness of an angel's accents, as if to summon each upright man to his reward. But how is this? Does none answer to the call? Not one; for the just, the pure, the true, and all who might most worthily obey it shrink sadly back as most conscious of error and imperfection. Then let the summons be to those whose pervading principle is love. This classification will embrace all the truly good, and none in whose souls there exists not something that may expand itself into a heaven both of well-doing and felicity.

The first that presents himself is a man of wealth who has bequeathed the bulk of his property to a hospital; his ghost, methinks, would have a better right here than his living body. But here they come, the genuine benefactors of their race. Some have wandered about the earth with pictures of bliss in their imagination and with hearts that shrank sensitively from the idea of pain and woe, yet have studied all varieties of misery that human nature can endure. The prison, the insane asylum, the squalid chamber of the almshouse, the manufactory where the demon of machinery annihilates the human soul, and the cotton-field where God's image becomes a beast of burden—to these, and every other scene where man wrongs or neglects his brother, the apostles of humanity have penetrated. This missionary black with India's burning sunshine shall give his arm to a pale-faced brother who has made himself familiar with the infected alleys and loathsome haunts of vice in one of our own cities. The generous founder of a college shall be the partner of a maiden lady of narrow substance, one of whose good deeds it has been to gather a little school of orphan children. If the mighty merchant whose benefactions are reckoned by thousands of dollars deem himself worthy, let him join the procession with her whose love has proved itself by watching at the sick-bed, and all those lowly offices which bring her into actual contact with disease and wretchedness. And with those whose impulses have guided them to benevolent actions we will rank others, to whom providence has assigned a different tendency and different powers. Men who have spent their lives in generous and holy contemplation for the human race, those who, by a certain heavenliness of spirit, have purified the atmosphere around them, and thus supplied a medium in which good and

high things may be projected and performed—give to these a lofty place among the benefactors of mankind, although no deed such as the world calls deeds may be recorded of them. There are some individuals of whom we cannot conceive it proper that they should apply their hands to any earthly instrument or work out any definite act, and others—perhaps not less high—to whom it is an essential attribute to labor in body as well as spirit for the welfare of their brethren. Thus, if we find a spiritual sage whose unseen inestimable influence has exalted the moral standard of mankind, we will choose for his companion some poor laborer who has wrought for love in the potato-field of a neighbor poorer than himself.

We have summoned this various multitude—and, to the credit of our nature, it is a large one—on the principle of love. It is singular, nevertheless, to remark the shyness that exists among many members of the present class, all of whom we might expect to recognize one another by the freemasonry of mutual goodness, and to embrace like brethren, giving God thanks for such various specimens of human excellence. But it is far otherwise. Each sect surrounds its own righteousness with a hedge of thorns. It is difficult for the good Christian to acknowledge the good pagan, almost impossible for the good orthodox to grasp the hand of the good Unitarian, leaving to their Creator to settle the matters in dispute and giving their mutual efforts strongly and trustingly to whatever right thing is too evident to be mistaken. Then, again, though the heart be large, yet the mind is often of such moderate dimensions as to be exclusively filled up with one idea. When a good man has long devoted himself to a particular kind of beneficence, to one species of reform, he is apt to become narrowed into the limits of the path wherein he treads, and to fancy that there is no other good to be done on earth but that self-same good to which he has put his hand and in the very mode that best suits his own conceptions. All else is worthless: his scheme must be wrought out by the united strength of the whole world's stock of love, or the world is no longer worthy of a position in the universe. Moreover, powerful truth, being the rich grape-juice expressed from the vineyard of the ages, has an intoxicating quality when imbibed by any save a powerful intellect, and often, as it were, impels the quaffer to quarrel in his cups. For such reasons,

strange to say, it is harder to contrive a friendly arrangement of these brethren of love and righteousness in the procession of life than to unite even the wicked, who, indeed, are chained together by their crimes. The fact is too preposterous for tears, too lugubrious for laughter.

But let good men push and elbow one another as they may during their earthly march, all will be peace among them when the honorable array of their procession shall tread on heavenly ground. There they will doubtless find that they have been working each for the other's cause, and that every well-delivered stroke which with an honest purpose any mortal struck, even for a narrow object, was indeed stricken for the universal cause of good. Their own view may be bounded by country, creed, profession, the diversities of individual character, but above them all is the breadth of providence. How many who have deemed themselves antagonists will smile hereafter when they look back upon the world's wide harvest-field, and perceive that in unconscious brotherhood they were helping to bind the self-same sheaf!

But come! The sun is hastening westward, while the march of human life, that never paused before, is delayed by our attempt to rearrange its order. It is desirable to find some comprehensive principle that shall render our task easier by bringing thousands into the ranks where hitherto we have brought one. Therefore let the trumpet, if possible, split its brazen throat with a louder note than ever, and the herald summon all mortals who, from whatever cause, have lost, or never found, their proper places in the world.

Obedient to this call, a great multitude come together, most of them with a listless gait betokening weariness of soul, yet with a gleam of satisfaction in their faces at a prospect of at length reaching those positions which hitherto they have vainly sought. But here will be another disappointment, for we can attempt no more than merely to associate in one fraternity all who are afflicted with the same vague trouble. Some great mistake in life is the chief condition of admittance into this class. Here are members of the learned professions whom providence endowed with special gifts for the plough, the forge, and the wheelbarrow, or for the routine of unintellectual business. We will assign them as partners in the march those lowly laborers and

handicraftsmen who have pined as with a dying thirst after the unattainable fountains of knowledge. The latter have lost less than their companions, yet more, because they deem it infinite. Perchance the two species of unfortunates may comfort one another. Here are Quakers with the instinct of battle in them, and men of war who should have worn the broad brim. Authors shall be ranked here whom some freak of nature, making game of her poor children, had imbued with the confidence of genius, and strong desire of fame, but has favored with no corresponding power, and others whose lofty gifts were unaccompanied with the faculty of expression, or any of that earthly machinery by which ethereal endowments must be manifested to mankind. All these, therefore, are melancholy laughing-stocks. Next, here are honest and well-intentioned persons who, by a want of tact, by inaccurate perceptions, by a distorting imagination, have been kept continually at cross-purposes with the world, and bewildered upon the path of life. Let us see if they can confine themselves within the line of our procession. In this class, likewise, we must assign places to those who have encountered that worst of ill-success, a higher fortune than their abilities could vindicate—writers, actors, painters, the pets of a day, but whose laurels wither, unrenewed amid their hoary hair, politicians whom some malicious contingency of affairs has thrust into conspicuous station, where, while the world stands gazing at them, the dreary consciousness of imbecility makes them curse their birth-hour. To such men we give for a companion him whose rare talents, which perhaps require a revolution for their exercise, are buried in the tomb of sluggish circumstances.

Not far from these we must find room for one whose success has been of the wrong kind—the man who should have lingered in the cloisters of a university digging new treasures out of the Herculaneum of antique lore, diffusing depth and accuracy of literature throughout his country, and thus making for himself a great and quiet fame. But the outward tendencies around him have proved too powerful for his inward nature, and have drawn him into the arena of political tumult, there to contend at disadvantage, whether front to front, or side by side, with the brawny giants of actual life. He becomes, it may be, a name for brawling parties to bandy to and fro, a legislator of the Union, a Governor of his native State, an ambassador to the courts of

kings or queens, and the world may deem him a man of happy stars. But not so the wise, and not so himself, when he looks through his experience and sighs to miss that fitness, the one invaluable touch which makes all things true and real, so much achieved yet how abortive is his life! Whom shall we choose for his companion? Some weak-framed blacksmith, perhaps, whose delicacy of muscle might have suited a tailor's shop-board better than the anvil.

Shall we bid the trumpet sound again? It is hardly worth the while. There remain a few idle men of fortune, tavern and grog-shop loungers, lazzaroni, old bachelors, decaying maidens and people of crooked intellect or temper, all of whom may find their like, or some tolerable approach to it, in the plentiful diversity of our latter class. There, too, as his ultimate destiny, must we rank the dreamer who all his life long has cherished the idea that he was peculiarly apt for something, but never could determine what it was, and there the most unfortunate of men, whose purpose it has been to enjoy life's pleasures, but to avoid a manful struggle with its toil and sorrow. The remainder, if any, may connect themselves with whatever rank of the procession they shall find best adapted to their tastes and consciences. The worst possible fate would be to remain behind shivering in the solitude of time while all the world is on the move toward eternity.

Our attempt to classify society is now complete. The result may be anything but perfect, yet better—to give it the very lowest phrase—than the antique rule of the herald's office or the modern one of the tax-gatherer, whereby the accidents and superficial attributes with which the real nature of individuals has least to do are acted upon as the deepest characteristics of mankind. Our task is done! Now let the grand procession move!

Yet, pause awhile; we had forgotten the chief marshal.

Hark! That world-wide swell of solemn music with the clang of a mighty bell breaking forth through its regulated uproar announces his approach. He comes, a severe, sedate, immovable, dark rider, waving his truncheon of universal sway as he passes along the lengthened line on the pale horse of the Revelations. It is Death. Who else could assume the guidance of a procession that comprehends all humanity? And if some

among these many millions should deem themselves classed amiss, yet let them take to their hearts the comfortable truth that Death levels us all into one great brotherhood, and that another state of being will surely rectify the wrong of this. Then breathe thy wail upon the earth's wailing wind, thou band of melancholy music made up of every sigh that the human heart unsatisfied has uttered! There is yet triumph in thy tones.

And now we move, beggars in their rags and kings trailing the regal purple in the dust, the warrior's gleaming helmet, the priest in his sable robe, the hoary grandsire who has run life's circle and come back to childhood, the ruddy school-boy with his golden curls frisking along the march, the artisan's stuff jacket, the noble's star-decorated coat, the whole presenting a motley spectacle, yet with a dusky grandeur brooding over it. Onward, onward, into that dimness where the lights of time which have blazed along the procession are flickering in their sockets! And whither? We know not, and Death, hitherto our leader, deserts us by the wayside, as the tramp of our innumerable footsteps passes beyond his sphere. He knows not more than we our destined goal, but God, who made us, knows, and will not leave us on our toilsome and doubtful march, either to wander in infinite uncertainty or perish by the way.





DEFENCE OF POETRY

—

BY

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

## HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

1807—1882

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was born in Portland, Maine, in 1807. His father was a prominent lawyer, and had served in Congress, but was not wealthy. At the age of twelve he entered Bowdoin College, where he graduated in 1825. One of the trustees of the college had been greatly pleased with some of Longfellow's work, and shortly after graduation he was appointed to the professorship of modern languages, then just established. A suggestion of three years' study in Europe as a preparation for the position accompanied the appointment. This offer was accepted joyfully, and his stay abroad proved of the greatest advantage both to himself and his pupils. He began his duties in 1829.

In 1835 he published his first book, "Outre Mer," sketches of travel abroad, not unlike the sketches of Irving. The same year he was appointed professor of modern languages at Harvard, and again went abroad in preparation for his new duties. During this journey he met with his first great sorrow, in the death of his wife. In "The Footsteps of Angels," and in several other poems, he honors her memory. In 1839 appeared the prose romance, "Hyperion," and the first collection of his poems, "The Voices of the Night." Some of the poems published in this collection, such as "The Psalm of Life" and "The Reaper and the Flowers," have since become household words in America. "Ballads and Other Poems," containing some of his finest lyrics and ballads, followed two years later.

The next year Longfellow married for the second time, and acquired the Cragie House, in Cambridge, for his home. "The Belfry of Bruges" appeared in 1846, "Evangeline" in 1847, "The Golden Legend" in 1851, "The Song of Hiawatha" in 1855, "The Courtship of Miles Standish" in 1858, and many others. He resigned his professorship in Harvard in 1854 in order to devote his best energies to literary work. In 1861 his beautiful wife perished before his eyes, a tragedy that clouded the remainder of his life, and gave a tinge of sadness to much of his later poetry. He continued, however, to write with the same industry and success as before, and a new volume from his pen was brought out almost every year. At the time of his death, which occurred in Cambridge in 1882, he left two volumes in manuscript, which were published as a posthumous work.

Longfellow takes high rank among the great poets of English literature. Although rarely profound, Longfellow struck a note that awakened responsive echoes in all hearts. His fame rests chiefly on his lyrics, and he is likely to remain one of America's most popular poets. His prose works, while of minor importance, are marked by the same grace and delicacy of style, and are pervaded by the same noble spirit as his poetry. Both in his sketches of travel and in his literary essays we are impressed by his scholarly and felicitous treatment of the topic in question, and charmed by the even flow of his style, always mellow and sympathetic.

## DEFENCE OF POETRY

GENTLE Sir Philip Sidney, thou knewest what belonged to a scholar; thou knewest what pains, what toil, what travel, conduct to perfection; well couldst thou give every virtue his encouragement, every art his due, every writer his desert, 'cause none more virtuous, witty, or learned than thyself."<sup>1</sup> This eulogium was bestowed upon one of the most learned and illustrious men that adorned the last half of the sixteenth century. Literary history is full of his praises. He is spoken of as the ripe scholar, the able statesman—"the soldier's, scholar's, courtier's eye, tongue, sword"—the man "whose whole life was poetry put into action." He and the Chevalier Bayard were the connecting links between the ages of chivalry and our own.

Sir Philip Sidney was born at Penshurst, in West Kent, on November 29, 1554, and died on October 16, 1586, from the wound of a musket-shot received under the walls of Zutphen, a town in Guelderland, on the banks of the Issel. When he was retiring from the field of battle an incident occurred which well illustrates his chivalrous spirit, and that goodness of heart which gained him the appellation of the "Gentle Sir Philip Sidney." The circumstance has been made the subject of an historical painting by West. It is thus related by Lord Brooke:

"The horse he rode upon was rather furiously choleric than bravely proud, and so forced him to forsake the field, but not his back, as the noblest and fittest bier to carry a martial commander to his grave. In which sad progress, passing along by the rest of the army where his uncle the general was, and being thirsty with excess of bleeding, he called for drink, which was presently brought him; but, as he was putting the bottle to his mouth, he saw a poor soldier carried along, who had eaten his last at the same feast, ghastly casting up his eyes at the bottle. Which Sir Philip perceiving, took it from his head, before he drank, and

<sup>1</sup> Nash's "Pierce Penniless."

delivered it to the poor man, with these words, 'Thy necessity is yet greater than mine.'"

The most celebrated productions of Sidney's pen are the "Arcadia" and the "Defence of Poesy." The former was written during the author's retirement at Wilton, the residence of his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. Though so much celebrated in its day,<sup>2</sup> it is now little known, and still less read. Its very subject prevents it from being popular at present; for now the pastoral reed seems entirely thrown aside. The muses no longer haunt the groves of Arcadia. The shepherd's song—the sound of oaten pipe, and the scenes of pastoral loves and jealousies, are no becoming themes for the spirit of the age. Few at present take for their motto, "*flumina amo silvasque inglorius*," and, consequently, few read the "Arcadia."

The "Defence of Poesy" is a work of rare merit. It is a golden little volume, which the scholar may lay beneath his pillow, as Chrysostom did the works of Aristophanes. We do not, however, mean to analyze it in this place; but recommend to our readers to purchase this "sweet food of sweetly uttered knowledge." It will be read with delight by all who have a taste for the true beauties of poetry; and may go far to remove the prejudices of those who have not. To this latter class we address the concluding remarks of the author:

"So that since the ever-praiseworthy poesy is full of virtue, breeding delightfulness, and void of no gift that ought to be in the noble name of learning; since the blames laid against it are either false or feeble; since the cause why it is not esteemed in England is the fault of poet-apes, not poets; since, lastly, our tongue is most fit to honor poesy, and to be honored by poesy; I conjure you all that have had the evil luck to read this ink-wasting toy of mine, even in the name of the nine muses, no more to scorn the sacred mysteries of poesy; no more to laugh at the name of poets, as though they were next inheritors to fools; no more to jest at the reverend title of 'a rhymers'; but to believe, with Aristotle, that they were the ancient treas-

<sup>2</sup> Many of our readers will recollect the high-wrought eulogium of Harvey Pierce, when he consigned the work to immortality: "Live ever sweete, sweete booke: the simple image of his gentle witt; and the golden pillar of his noble courage; and ever notify unto the world that thy writer was the secretary of

eloquence, the breath of the muses, the honey-bee of the daintiest flowers of witt and arte; the pith of morale and intellectual virtues, the arme of Bellona in the field, the tongue of Suada in the chamber, the sprite of Practice in esse, and the paragon of excellency in print."

urers of the Grecians' divinity; to believe, with Bembus, that they were the first bringers in of all civility; to believe, with Scaliger, that no philosopher's precepts can sooner make you an honest man, than the reading of Vergil; to believe, with Clauserus, the translator of Cornutus, that it pleased the heavenly deity by Hesiod and Homer, under the veil of fables, to give us all knowledge, logic, rhetoric, philosophy, natural and moral, and '*quid non?*' to believe, with me, that there are many mysteries contained in poetry, which of purpose were written darkly, lest by profane wits it should be abused; to believe, with Landin, that they are so beloved of the gods, that whatsoever they write proceeds of a divine fury; lastly, to believe themselves, when they tell you they will make you immortal by their verses.

"Thus doing, your names shall flourish in the printers' shops; thus doing, you shall be of kin to many a poetical preface; thus doing, you shall be most fair, most rich, most wise, most all; you shall dwell upon superlatives; thus doing, though you be '*libertino patre natus*,' you shall suddenly grow '*Herculeæ proles*'—

*'Si quid mea carmina possunt':*

thus doing, your soul shall be placed with Dante's Beatrix, or Vergil's Anchises.

"But if (fie of such a but!) you be born so near the dull-making cataract of Nilus that you cannot hear the planet-like music of poetry; if you have so earth-creeping a mind that it cannot lift itself up to look to the sky of poetry, or rather, by a certain rustical disdain, will become such a mome as to be a Momus of poetry; then, though I will not wish unto you the ass's ears of Midas, nor to be driven by a poet's verses, as Bionax was, to hang himself; nor to be rhymed to death, as is said to be done in Ireland; yet thus much curse I must send you in the behalf of all poets; that while you live, you live in love, and never get favor, for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph."

As no "Apologie for Poetrie" has appeared among us, we hope that Sir Philip Sidney's "Defence" will be widely read and long remembered. O that in our country it might be the harbinger of as bright an intellectual day as it was in his own!

With us, the spirit of the age is clamorous for utility—for visible, tangible utility—for bare, brawny, muscular utility. We would be roused to action by the voice of the populace, and the sounds of the crowded mart, and not “lulled asleep in shady idleness with poet’s pastimes.” We are swallowed up in schemes for gain, and engrossed with contrivances for bodily enjoyments, as if this particle of dust were immortal—as if the soul needed no aliment, and the mind no raiment. We glory in the extent of our territory, in our rapidly increasing population, in our agricultural privileges, and our commercial advantages. We boast of the magnificence and beauty of our natural scenery—of the various climates of our sky—the summers of our northern regions—the salubrious winters of the south, and of the various products of our soil, from the pines of our northern highlands to the palm-tree and aloes of our southern frontier. We boast of the increase and extent of our physical strength, the sound of populous cities, breaking the silence and solitude of our western Territories—plantations conquered from the forest, and gardens springing up in the wilderness. Yet the true glory of a nation consists not in the extent of its territory, the pomp of its forests, the majesty of its rivers, the height of its mountains, and the beauty of its sky, but in the extent of its mental power—the majesty of its intellect—the height, and depth, and purity of its moral nature. It consists not in what nature has given to the body, but in what nature and education have given to the mind—not in the world around us, but in the world within us—not in the circumstances of fortune, but in the attributes of the soul—not in the corruptible, transitory, and perishable forms of matter, but in the incorruptible, the permanent, the imperishable mind. True greatness is the greatness of the mind—the true glory of a nation is moral and intellectual preëminence.

But still the main current of education runs in the wide and not well-defined channel of immediate and practical utility. The main point is how to make the greatest progress in worldly prosperity—how to advance most rapidly in the career of gain. This, perhaps, is necessarily the case to a certain extent in a country where every man is taught to rely upon his own exertions for a livelihood, and is the artificer of his own fortune and estate. But it ought not to be exclusively so. We ought not,

in the pursuit of wealth and worldly honor, to forget those embellishments of the mind and the heart which sweeten social intercourse and improve the condition of society. And yet, in the language of Dr. Paley, "Many of us are brought up with this world set before us, and nothing else. Whatever promotes this world's prosperity is praised; whatever hurts and obstructs this world's prosperity is blamed; and there all praise and censure end. We see mankind about us in motion and action, but all these motions and actions directed to worldly objects. We hear their conversation, but it is all the same way. And this is what we see and hear from the first: The views which are continually placed before our eyes regard this life alone and its interests. Can it then be wondered at that an early worldly-mindedness is bred in our hearts so strong as to shut out heavenly-mindedness entirely?" And this, though not in so many words, yet in fact and in its practical tendency, is the popular doctrine of utility.

Now, under correction be it said, we are much led astray by this word utility. There is hardly a word in our language whose meaning is so vague, and so often misunderstood and misapplied. We too often limit its application to those acquisitions and pursuits which are of immediate and visible profit to ourselves and the community; regarding as comparatively or utterly useless many others which, though more remote in their effects and more imperceptible in their operation, are, notwithstanding, higher in their aim, wider in their influence, more certain in their results, and more intimately connected with the common weal. We are too apt to think that nothing can be useful but what is done with a noise, at noonday, and at the corners of the streets; as if action and utility were synonymous, and it were not as useless to act without thinking as it is to think without acting. But the truth is, the word utility has a wider signification than this. It embraces in its proper definition whatever contributes to our happiness; and thus includes many of those arts and sciences, many of those secret studies and solitary avocations which are generally regarded either as useless or as absolutely injurious to society. Not he alone does service to the state whose wisdom guides her councils at home, nor he whose voice asserts her dignity abroad. A thousand little rills, springing up in the retired walks of life, go to swell the rushing tide of



national glory and prosperity; and whoever in the solitude of his chamber, and by even a single effort of his mind, has added to the intellectual preëminence of his country, has not lived in vain, nor to himself alone. Does not the pen of the historian perpetuate the fame of the hero and the statesman? Do not their names live in the song of the bard? Do not the pencil and the chisel touch the soul while they delight the eye? Does not the spirit of the patriot and the sage, looking from the painted canvas, or eloquent from the marble lip, fill our hearts with veneration for all that is great in intellect and godlike in virtue?

If this be true, then are the ornamental arts of life not merely ornamental, but at the same time highly useful; and poetry and the fine arts become the instruction as well as the amusement of mankind. They will not till our lands, nor freight our ships, nor fill our granaries and our coffers; but they will enrich the heart, freight the understanding, and make up the garnered fulness of the mind. And this we hold to be the true view of the subject.

Among the barbarous nations, which in the early centuries of our era overran the south of Europe, the most contumelious epithet which could be applied to a man was to call him a Roman. All the corruption and degeneracy of the Western Empire were associated, in the minds of the Gothic tribes, with a love of letters and the fine arts. So far did this belief influence their practice that they would not suffer their children to be instructed in the learning of the south. "Instruction in the sciences," said they, "tends to corrupt, enervate, and depress the mind; and he who has been accustomed to tremble under the rod of a pedagogue will never look on a sword or a spear with an undaunted eye."<sup>3</sup> We apprehend that there are some, and indeed not a few in our active community, who hold the appellation of scholar and man of letters in as little repute as did our Gothic ancestors that of Roman; associating with it about the same ideas of effeminacy and inefficiency. They think that the learning of books is not wisdom; that study unfits a man for action; that poetry and nonsense are convertible terms; that literature begets an effeminate and craven spirit; in a word, that the dust and cobwebs of a library are a kind of armor which

<sup>3</sup> "Procop. de bello Gothor." apud Robertson, "History of Charles V," vol. i., p. 234.

will not stand long against the hard knocks of the "bone and muscle of the state" and the "huge two-fisted sway" of the stump orator. Whenever intellect is called into action, they would have the mind display a rough and natural energy—strength, straightforward strength, untutored in the rules of art, and unadorned by elegant and courtly erudition. They want the stirring voice of Demosthenes, accustomed to the roar of the tempest and the dashing of the sea upon its hollow-sounding shore, rather than the winning eloquence of Phalereus, coming into the sun and dust of the battle, not from the martial tent of the soldier, but from the philosophic shades of Theophrastus.

But against no branch of scholarship is the cry so loud as against poetry, "the quintessence, or rather the luxury of all learning." Its enemies pretend that it is injurious both to the mind and the heart; that it incapacitates us for the severer discipline of professional study; and that, by exciting the feelings and misdirecting the imagination, it unfits us for the common duties of life and the intercourse of this matter-of-fact world. And yet such men have lived, as Homer, and Dante, and Milton—poets and scholars whose minds were bathed in song, and yet not weakened; men who severally carried forward the spirit of their age, who soared upward on the wings of poetry, and yet were not unfitted to penetrate the deepest recesses of the human soul and search out the hidden treasures of wisdom and the secret springs of thought, feeling, and action. None fought more bravely at Marathon, Salamis, and Plataea than did the poet Æschylus. Richard Cœur-de-Lion was a poet; but his boast was in his very song:

"Bon guerrier à l'estendart  
Trouvaretz le Roi Richard."

Ercilla and Garcilaso were poets; but the great epic of Spain was written in the soldier's tent and on the field of battle, and the descendant of the Incas was slain in the assault of a castle in the south of France. Cervantes lost an arm at the battle of Lepanto, and Sir Philip Sidney was the breathing reality of the poet's dream, a living and glorious proof that poetry neither enervates the mind nor unfits us for the practical duties of life.

Nor is it less true that the legitimate tendency of poetry is to

exalt rather than to debase—to purify rather than to corrupt. Read the inspired pages of the Hebrew prophets; the eloquent aspirations of the Psalmist! Where did ever the spirit of devotion bear up the soul more steadily and loftily than in the language of their poetry? And where has poetry been more exalted, more spirit-stirring, more admirable, or more beautiful, than when thus soaring upward on the wings of sublime devotion, the darkness and shadows of earth beneath it, and from above the brightness of an opened heaven pouring around it? It is true the poetic talent may be, for it has been, most lamentably perverted. But when poetry is thus perverted—when it thus forgets its native sky to grovel in what is base, sensual, and depraved—though it may not have lost all its original brightness, nor appear less than “the excess of glory obscured,” yet its birthright has been sold, its strength has been blasted, and its spirit wears “deep scars of thunder.”

It does not, then, appear to be the necessary nor the natural tendency of poetry to enervate the mind, corrupt the heart, or incapacitate us for performing the private and public duties of life. On the contrary, it may be made, and should be made, an instrument for improving the condition of society, and advancing the great purpose of human happiness. Man must have his hours of meditation as well as of action. The unities of time are not so well preserved in the great drama but that moments will occur when the stage must be left vacant, and even the busiest actors pass behind the scenes. There will be eddies in the stream of life, though the main current sweeps steadily onward, till “it pours in full cataract over the grave.” There are times when both mind and body are worn down by the severity of daily toil; when the grasshopper is a burden, and, thirsty with the heat of labor, the spirit longs for the waters of Shiloah that go softly. At such seasons both mind and body should unbend themselves; they should be set free from the yoke of their customary service, and thought take some other direction than that of the beaten, dusty thoroughfare of business. And there are times, too, when the divinity stirs within us; when the soul abstracts herself from the world, and the slow and regular motions of earthly business do not keep pace with the heaven-directed mind. Then earth lets go her hold; the soul feels herself more akin to heaven; and soaring upward, the denizen of

her native sky, she "begins to reason like herself, and to discourse in a strain above mortality." Call, if you will, such thoughts and feelings the dreams of the imagination; yet they are no unprofitable dreams. Such moments of silence and meditation are often those of the greatest utility to ourselves and others. Yes, we would dream awhile, that the spirit is not always the bondman of the flesh; that there is something immortal in us, something which, amid the din of life, urges us to aspire after the attributes of a more spiritual nature. Let the cares and business of the world sometimes sleep, for this sleep is the awakening of the soul.

To fill up these interludes of life with a song, that shall soothe our worldly passions and inspire us with a love of heaven and virtue, seems to be the peculiar province of poetry. On this moral influence of the poetic art, there is a beautifully written passage in the "Defence of Poesy":

"The philosopher sheweth you the way, he informeth you of the particularities, as well of the tediousness of the way and of the pleasant lodging you shall have when your journey is ended, as of the many by-turnings that may divert you from your way; but this is to no man, but to him that will read him, and read him with attentive, studious painfulness; which constant desire whosoever hath in him hath already passed half the hardness of the way, and therefore is beholden to the philosopher but for the other half. Nay, truly, learned men have learnedly thought that, where once reason hath so much overmastered passion as that the mind hath a free desire to do well, the inward light each mind hath in itself is as good as a philosopher's book; since in nature we know it is well to do well, and what is well and what is evil, although not in the words of art which philosophers bestow upon us; for out of natural conceit the philosophers drew it; but to be moved to do that which we know, or to be moved with desire to know, '*hoc opus, hic labor est.*'"

"Now, therein, of all sciences (I speak still of human, and according to the human conceit) is our poet the monarch. For he doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it; nay, he doth, as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at the very first give you a cluster of grapes, that full of that taste you may long to pass farther. He beginneth not with obscure

definitions, which must blur the margin with interpretations, and load the memory with doubtfulness, but he cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for, the well-enchanting skill of music; and with a tale, forsooth, he cometh unto you, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney-corner; and, pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue."

In fine, we think that all the popular objections against poetry may be not only satisfactorily but triumphantly answered. They are all founded upon its abuse, and not upon its natural and legitimate tendencies. Indeed, popular judgment has seldom fallen into a greater error than that of supposing that poetry must necessarily, and from its very nature, convey false and therefore injurious impressions. The error lies in not discriminating between what is true to nature and what is true to fact. From the very nature of things, neither poetry nor any one of the imitative arts can in itself be false. They can be false no further than, by the imperfection of human skill, they convey to our minds imperfect and garbled views of what they represent. Hence a painting or poetical description may be true to nature, and yet false in point of fact. The canvas before you may represent a scene in which every individual feature of the landscape shall be true to nature—the tree, the waterfall, the distant mountain—every object there shall be an exact copy of an original that has a real existence, and yet the scene itself may be absolutely false in point of fact. Such a scene, with the features of the landscape combined precisely in the way represented, may exist nowhere but in the imagination of the artist. The statue of the Venus de' Medici is the perfection of female beauty; and every individual feature had its living original. Still, the statue itself had no living archetype. It is true to nature, but it is not true to fact. So with the stage. The scene represented, the characters introduced, the plot of the piece, and the action of the performers may all be conformable to nature, and yet not be conformable to any preëxisting reality. The characters there personified may never have existed; the events represented may never have transpired. And so, too, with poetry. The scenes and events it describes, the characters and passions it portrays, may all be natural though not real. Thus, in a certain sense,

fiction itself may be true—true to the nature of things, and consequently true in the impressions it conveys. And hence the reason why fiction has always been made so subservient to the cause of truth.

Allowing, then, that poetry is nothing but fiction, that all it describes is false in point of fact, still its elements have a real existence, and the impressions we receive can be erroneous so far only as the views presented to the mind are garbled and false to nature. And this is a fault incident to the artist, and not inherent in the art itself. So that we may fairly conclude, from these considerations, that the natural tendency of poetry is to give us correct moral impressions, and thereby advance the cause of truth and the improvement of society.

There is another very important view of the subject arising out of the origin and nature of poetry, and its intimate connection with individual character and the character of society.

The origin of poetry loses itself in the shades of a remote and fabulous age, of which we have only vague and uncertain traditions. Its fountain, like that of the river of the desert, springs up in a distant and unknown region, the theme of visionary story and the subject of curious speculation. Doubtless, however, it originated amid the scenes of pastoral life and in the quiet and repose of a golden age. There is something in the soft melancholy of the groves which pervades the heart and kindles the imagination. Their retirement is favorable to the musings of the poetic mind. The trees that waved their leafy branches to the summer wind or heaved and groaned beneath the passing storm, the shadow moving on the grass, the bubbling brook, the insect skimming on its surface, the receding valley and the distant mountain—these would be some of the elements of pastoral song. Its subject would naturally be the complaint of a shepherd and the charms of some gentle shepherdess—

“A happy soul, that all the way  
To heaven hath a summer’s day.”

It is natural, too, that the imagination, familiar with the outward world, and connecting the idea of the changing seasons and the spontaneous fruits of the earth with the agency of some unknown power that regulated and produced them, should suggest the thought of presiding deities, propitious in the smiling

sky and adverse in the storm. The fountain that gushed up as if to meet the thirsty lip was made the dwelling of a nymph; the grove that lent its shelter and repose from the heat of noon became the abode of dryads; a god presided over shepherds and their flocks, and a goddess shook the yellow harvest from her lap. These deities were propitiated by songs and festive rites. And thus poetry added new charms to the simplicity and repose of bucolic life, and the poet mingled in his verse the delights of rural ease and the praise of the rural deities which bestowed them.

Such was poetry in those happy ages, when, camps and courts unknown, life was itself an eclogue. But in later days it sang the achievements of Grecian and Roman heroes, and pealed in the war-song of the Gothic Skald. These early essays were rude and unpolished. As nations advanced in civilization and refinement poetry advanced with them. In each successive age it became the image of their thoughts and feelings, of their manners, customs, and characters; for poetry is but the warm expression of the thoughts and feelings of a people, and we speak of it as being national when the character of a nation shines visibly and distinctly through it.

Thus, for example, Castilian poetry is characterized by sounding expressions, and that pomp and majesty so peculiar to Spanish manners and character. On the other hand, English poetry possesses in a high degree the charms of rural and moral feeling; it flows onward like a woodland stream, in which we see the reflection of the sylvan landscape and of the heaven above us.

It is from this intimate connection of poetry with the manners, customs, and characters of nations, that one of its highest uses is drawn. The impressions produced by poetry upon national character, at any period, are again reproduced, and give a more pronounced and individual character to the poetry of a subsequent period. And hence it is that the poetry of a nation sometimes throws so strong a light upon the page of its history, and renders luminous those obscure passages which often baffle the long-searching eye of studious erudition. In this view, poetry assumes new importance with all who search for historic truth. Besides, the view of the various fluctuations of the human mind, as exhibited, not in history, but in the poetry of successive epochs, is more interesting, and less liable to convey erroneous

impressions, than any record of mere events. The great advantage drawn from the study of history is not to treasure up in the mind a multitude of disconnected facts, but from these facts to derive some conclusions, tending to illustrate the movements of the general mind, the progress of society, the manners, customs, and institutions, the moral and intellectual character of mankind in different nations, at different times, and under the operation of different circumstances. Historic facts are chiefly valuable as exhibiting intellectual phenomena. And, so far as poetry exhibits these phenomena more perfectly and distinctly than history does, so far is it superior to history. The history of a nation is the external symbol of its character; from it we reason back to the spirit of the age that fashioned its shallow outline. But poetry is the spirit of the age itself—embodied in the forms of language, and speaking in a voice that is audible to the external as well as the internal sense. The one makes known the impulses of the popular mind, through certain events resulting from them; the other displays the more immediate presence of that mind, visible in its action, and presaging those events. The one is like the marks left by the thunder-storm—the blasted tree—the purified atmosphere; the other like the flash from the bosom of the cloud, or the voice of the tempest, announcing its approach. The one is the track of the ocean on its shore; the other the continual movement and murmur of the sea.

Besides, there are epochs which have no contemporaneous history; but have left in their popular poetry pretty ample materials for estimating the character of the times. The events, indeed, therein recorded may be exaggerated facts, or vague traditions, or inventions entirely apocryphal; yet they faithfully represent the spirit of the ages which produced them; they contain direct allusions and incidental circumstances, too insignificant in themselves to have been fictitious, and yet on that very account the most important parts of the poem in an historical point of view. Such, for example, are the "*Nibelungen Lied*" in Germany; the "*Poema del Cid*" in Spain; and the "*Songs of the Troubadours*" in France. Hence poetry comes in for a large share in that high eulogy which, in the true spirit of the scholar, a celebrated German critic has bestowed upon letters: "If we consider literature in its widest sense, as the voice which



gives expression to human intellect—as the aggregate mass of symbols, in which the spirit of an age or the character of a nation is shadowed forth, then indeed a great and various literature is, without doubt, the most valuable possession of which any nation can boast.”<sup>4</sup>

From all these considerations, we are forced to the conclusion that poetry is a subject of far greater importance in itself, and in its bearing upon the condition of society, than the majority of mankind would be willing to allow. We heartily regret that this opinion is not a more prevailing one in our land. We give too little encouragement to works of imagination and taste. The vocation of the poet does not stand high enough in our esteem; we are too cold in admiration, too timid in praise. The poetic lute and the high-sounding lyre are much too often and too generally looked upon as the baubles of effeminate minds, or bells and rattles to please the ears of children. The prospect, however, brightens. But a short time ago not a poet “moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped”; and now we have a host of them—three or four good ones, and three or four hundred poor ones. This, however, we will not stop to cavil about at present. To those of them who may honor us by reading our article we would whisper this request—that they should be more original, and withal more national. It seems every way important that now, while we are forming our literature, we should make it as original, characteristic, and national as possible. To effect this, it is not necessary that the war-whoop should ring in every line, and every page be rife with scalps, tomahawks, and wampum. Shade of Tecumseh forbid! The whole secret lies in Sidney’s maxim—“Look in thy heart and write.” For—

“Cantars non pot gaire valer.  
Si d’inz del cor no mov lo chang.”<sup>5</sup>

Of this anon. We will first make a few remarks upon the word national, as applied to the literature of a country; for when we speak of a national poetry we do not employ the term in that vague and indefinite way in which many writers use it.

A national literature, then, in the widest signification of the words, embraces every mental effort made by the inhabitants of

<sup>4</sup> Schlegel, “Lectures on the History of Literature,” vol. i., lec. vii.

<sup>5</sup> “The poet’s song is little worth,  
If it moveth not from within the heart.”

